WELCH, METOKA L., Ph. D."Tell Me What Your God Look Like": A Study of African Americans and the God-Image. (2010)
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The purpose of this research study was to investigate the Image of God and Racial Identity of African American attendees of Black Churches in rural areas, where religious activity is said to permeate everyday life (Hunt & Hunt, 2001). Eight African Americans over the age of 25 who attended a rural Black Church at least once a month were interviewed and given a racial identity assessment. Results from the qualitative interview were analyzed using Hill, Thompson, and Williams' (1997) Consensual Qualitative Research. Qualitative analyses indicated that participants' Image of God included visual images, thoughts, feelings, characteristics of God, and beliefs about God. At least half of the participants in the study indicated a belief that God identified with the struggle of Black Americans. Further influences on participants' Image of God were childhood psychodynamic influences, church-going behaviors, and personal experiences.

Data analysis of the racial identity assessment, the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al., 1998), yielded a very discernable divide between younger participants (age < 50) and older participants (age > 50). Overall, older participants were less likely to indicate that being Black was central to their identity and were less likely to indicate that the Black Church was important to them, as opposed to younger participants.

The findings suggested that the Black Church is an important institution for participants who strongly identify as Black American. Broadly, the findings in this study suggested that participants' thoughts, feelings, imagery, and characteristics of God operated in a realm independent of race and church. However, in terms of beliefs about God, at least half of the participants in the study expressed the belief that God had an affinity for African Americans, supporting the claim of scholars who have posited that the God of African Americans differs from the God of other Americans (Calhoun-Brown, 1999; Lincoln, 2003). Implications for counselors and counselor educators, as well as future research studies and limitations of the study also are included.

"TELL ME WHAT YOUR GOD LOOK LIKE": A STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE GOD-IMAGE

By

Metoka L. Welch

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Approved by

Dr. L. DiAnne Borders
Committee Chair

Dedicated to my grandmother, Mrs. Mattie R. Welch (a.k.a. “Mother”), without whose strength, wisdom, and support, I would not be where I am today. Thank you. In memory of my grandparents who are no longer with me, but are still a part of me. I read a quote once: “Call an ancestor’s name daily and [they] shall live forever.” To Martha Thompson, Willie Thompson, and John Welch: I’m calling your names.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For as long as I can remember, God has been an inseparable part of my life. Born the middle child of a Missionary Baptist preacher, I often implored of God why life was so difficult for me (alas, insight into the tragic musings of the oft misunderstood middle sibling). So, I talked to God a great deal as a child. More importantly, in childhood, I was imbued with a sense of awe and reverence for this entity that both my parents loved. I often tell people, and this anecdote is very true, that my hatred for Duke Basketball began at a young age; so absolute was my love and respect for God that I feared the insidiously titled "Blue Devil." Because God was such a part of my family, nay, such a part of my history, I suppose it made sense for me to try to understand this Entity more both personally and professionally.

Because God has been so salient in my life, it is with great appreciation that I extend thanks to my dissertation committee and research team, which kept me grounded and focused. It was important for me to put together a team of individuals who would support and challenge me to grow as a researcher and a scholar. To my chair, Dr. Borders, who encouraged me, and pushed me, and prodded me, and whose purple editing pen exasperated me—this journey would not have been made possible without you. I enjoyed those conversations at the table in your office. I often joked with you that you had to be longsuffering to put up with my abstractions. However, you stuck with me and believed in me and motivated me to become a better writer and a more critical thinker. Thank you. I also extend thanks to Dr. Borders for agreeing to be a member of the

research team and for putting in the extra work that position required. You did not have to do that or even offer up your free time; I am extremely grateful.

To Dr. Cashwell: professionally, I am eternally grateful that I have had the opportunity to work with you. I have shared this with you, and I will do so again: your suggestion that I look into Image of God literature opened a door in front of me that clicked my research inquiries into place. Joseph Campbell said that when you follow your bliss, all doors open for you. Thank you for leading me to my bliss. Personally, I am grateful that you have supported me in my journey at UNCG. Years from now, I will probably look back at this paragraph and cringe at the pop culture reference that I am about to make, but I can't help but think about the film, *The Blind Side*. I have always perceived that you had my back. And, I have appreciated that you saw my "blind side" and have gently encouraged me to step into my hidden strengths.

I give special thanks to Dr. Hart, whose knowledge and guidance I often used. I am fortunate to have had such an invested cognate member who was willing to put up with my questions, offer me suggestions, and encourage my personal and professional development. Thank you. I am also grateful to Dr. Ackerman who has been a part of this process and who commented way back at the oral defense of my comprehensive exams that I should be doing qualitative research, thank you. To Ms. Janeé Avent who served as a member of my research team: I thank you for your time and talents. I don't take it lightly that you sacrificed your time and talents to be a part of this research team. I am not sure this document could have been completed without your insights.

To the eight amazing people who served as participants in this study and who allowed me into their homes and offices and even more intimately, allowed me to inquire about their most sacred spaces: thank you for your insights and comments.

I am a person who believes in destiny, so there are certain events that happened in my life that I will attribute to destiny's path. First would be the conversation that I had with Mr. Jonathan Tucker back in 2005. I knew where I wanted to go, but had no idea how to get there. Tucker, who at that time was in graduate school for counseling, told me about his program and encouraged me to look into the field of counseling. I often think back on that conversation and am grateful. It truly put me on my path. Secondly, I would like to thank my mentor Dr. Kenneth Simington, who propitiously told me after I had given a presentation in my multicultural counseling class back at Wake Forest, "you should teach." That statement ignited, propelled, and confirmed for me that I needed to pursue a doctorate degree. Thank you.

I would not be in a position to earn my Ph.D. had it not been for my parents, Wayne and JoAnn Welch. Daddy, people say I get my intelligence from you. If that is the case, I consider myself a very fortunate young woman; you are a brilliant man. In addition, I hope that I have more of your qualities because you have so much creativity, wisdom, and charisma. Somehow, you managed to share these talents with your family and your congregation. At times, I am amazed by all that you have accomplished and all that you continue to accomplish; Daddy, you instilled in me the tools that I would need to become an educator and a researcher.

Mama, you are one of the sweetest people that I know. People say that I get my kind heart and work ethic from you, I sincerely hope that this is the case. If Daddy gave me the tools that I needed to become a researcher and educator, you instilled in me a respect and compassion for those who hurt, a love for humanity, and a desire to make a difference in the lives of other people; you instilled in me the tools that I would need to become an empathic counselor, a gift that I treasure. For that, I am eternally grateful.

To Sherra and Ira, I love you both. Thank you for loving, supporting, and putting up with me. To Dawn, I am fortunate to have you as a sister in law. To my best friend, Mr. Michael Wray, I have so treasured our conversations about God and the church. I appreciate your intelligence and your giving spirit. I can't wait for the world to become aware of just how talented you are. To the lovely ladies of the Top Ten Cohort, this journey would not have been the same without you. To Mrs. Venus Pinnix, I do not think I would be making an overstatement if I said that the department would be lost without you. I know how strongly I feel this sentiment and have nothing but the utmost respect for what you do and for who you are. Thanks! I am grateful to Dr. Jane Myers, in whose class I was given the opportunity to write about a topic that interested me back in my first semester. To the rest of the CED Faculty, thank you.

Finally, to Faisal: I could not envision going through this process without you. I am so in love with you and appreciative of you. Thank you for never making me chose—school always came first. Thank you for your love, support, and encouragement. I have

shared experiences with you that I will cherish forever. I consider myself fortunate that, on top of my many blessings, I have you

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Then she say: tell me what your God look like, Celie…Okay, I say. He big and old and tall and graybearded and White. He wear White robes and go barefooted. Blue eyes? She ast. Sort of bluish-gray I say. She laugh…Then she tell me this old White man is the same God she used to see when she prayed…Then she sigh. (Walker, 1982, p. 201)

Rationale for the Study

In the above conversation from Alice Walker's (1982) Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Color Purple*, readers learn that Celie, Walker's protagonist, imagined her God as an old White man with a gray beard and blue eyes. Arguably, this image was assembled from all that was dominant and subjugating in Celie's larger macrosystem, yet detached and condescending in her microcosmic world. The history of slavery and feminine oppression in America would explicate Celie's imagining God as a White male (Williams, 1993); for many years, White males were those who were in positions of power (West, 2001). In fact, some would argue that embedded within Christianity are images of God and the Christ as White males (Akintunde, 1997; Kaur-Mann, 2003). However, the underlying ecological and psychological predicament for Celie is that her *place* as an indigent and abused Black woman in the 1920s in the South would suggest that the old White man of her ethereal imaginings connoted a disinterested, disconnected, and indifferent God.

Much like the fictitious Celie, scholars have examined the God-Image and its psychological ramifications as a barometric and multidimensional construct (Bassett & Williams, 2003; Cheston, Piedmont, Eanes, & Lavin, 2003; Grimes, 2007; Hoffman, Hoffman, Dillard, Clark, Acoba, Williams, & Jones, 2008; Lambert & Kurpius, 2004; Muller, 2004; Piedmont, Williams, & Ciarrocchi, 1997). Interestingly, the language that participants of empirical studies have applied to their God-image was similar to language that the participants used to describe subjective variables such as their self-esteem and parental representations (Bassett & Williams, 2003; Benson & Spilka, 1973; Cheston et al., 2003; Muller, 2004; Piedmont et al., 1997; Rizutto, 1979; Rizutto, 1982). Although researchers have made substantial contributions to the Image of God literature, participant samples have been largely White, with a majority of those participants identifying as Catholic (Dickie, Ajega, Kobylak, & Nixon, 2006; Lambert & Kurpius, 2004; Piedmont et al., 1997). Few researchers have investigated the God-image of an African American sample or even measured other psychosocial variables specifically relevant to African American experiences, such as religion and Racial Identity (Hoffman et al., 2008).

African American Religion

Researchers have iterated that African Americans are spiritually and religiously inclined (Douglas & Hopson, 2001; Frame, 2003; Frame & Williams, 1996; McRae, Thompson, & Cooper, 1999; Lee, 1999; Ward, 2005). In addition, researchers have shown that where African Americans underutilize mental health services (Ayalon & Young, 2005; Brown, 2004), they do utilize religious services, as their religious activity has been reported to outnumber White Americans in church attendance at every age,

income level, and educational level (Chatters Taylor, & Lincoln, 1999; Hunt & Hunt, 2001; Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2008; Robinson, 2006; Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2001). To meet their religious and spiritual needs, African Americans are more likely to attend a Black Church (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). A cornerstone in Black America (West & Glaude, 2003), The Black Church has served as the place of spiritual strength, communal support, and psychological reprieve (Douglas & Hopson, 2001; Frame & Williams, 2003; Lee, 1999; Willis, 2001). The predominance of African American membership and pastoral staff have distinguished The Black Church as a culturally specific entity (Genovese, 1974; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Raboteau, 2004), even as Black Churches have existed within Protestant denominations with majority White congregants. Specific to The Black Church are cultural behaviors, such as dancing, shouting, and singing (Gilkes, 1980; Griffith, Young, & Smith, 1984; Ellison, Musick, & Henderson, 2008; Haley, 1964; Newberg & Waldman, 2006; Welch, 2009; Willis, 2001). In addition, Black clergymen often employ an enthusiastic and charismatic style of preaching that elicits congregant participation (often referred to as call and response) and infuse their sermons with messages of racial empowerment (Calhoun-Brown, 1999; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Black Churches also have been theorized to have two orientations: other-worldly vs. this-worldly (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). In general, churches that have an other-worldly orientation tend to be churches that emphasize the universality of Christian suffering and the idea that a heavenly reward will compensate for injustices suffered while on earth (Martin, 2001). This-worldly churches focus on the unique pride and privilege of being an African American and the need to eliminate tensions that are

happening in the adjacent community and larger society. This-worldly oriented churches seek an activist approach to alleviate these oppressions and tensions (Martin, 2001). Researchers have suggested that the particular orientation of a Black Church can be influential in shaping African Americans' Image of God (Calhoun-Brown, 1999) and Racial Identity (Martin, 2001). Hence, the proliferated attendance of African Americans to a Black Church (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008), along with the social, spiritual, and psychological significance of the institution among African Americans (Douglas & Hopson, 2001; Frame & Williams, 2003; Genovese, 1974; Lee, 1999; West & Glaude, 2003; Willis, 2001) suggest that this setting may have a large impact on African Americans' Image of God. The purpose of this study, then, is to address the gap in the literature concerning African Americans who attend a Black Church, along with their Racial Identity and Image of God.

Racial Identity

Unlike race, which Murphy and Dillon (2008) defined as a classification of people based on geographic origin and shared physical characteristics like skin color, hair texture, and facial features, Racial Identity is a psychosocial and cognitive construct (Thompson, 1999) amassed of how one thinks and feels about one's race (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Sue & Sue, 2003). Researchers have found that one's Racial Identity is a multidimensional construct (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) influenced by family, peer, community, and educational groups, what Thompson and Carter (1997) called "socializing forces" (p. xv). Racial Identity also is thought to be influenced by subjective experiences with race, which includes experiences with other Black Americans, experiences with other racial/ethnic groups, experiences of

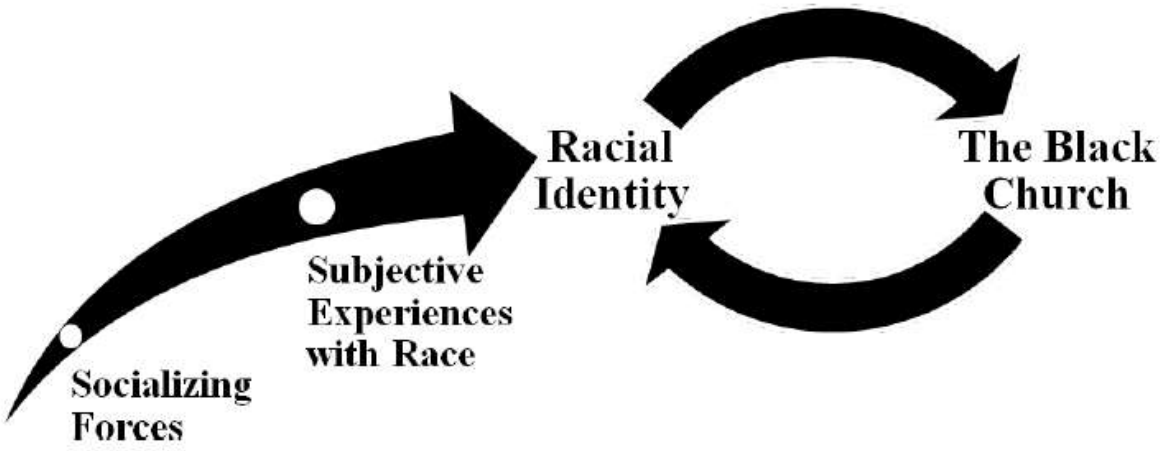
discrimination, experiences of racism, and attitudes about what it means to be a Black American (Murphy & Dillon, 2008; Sellers et al., 1998; Thompson & Carter, 1997). Sellers et al. (1998) argued that Racial Identity, like any other aspect of identity, has stabile properties and situational salience. For example, one may be a Black American (stabile property), but strongly identify with this identity as the only person of color at a Mid-Western conference (situational salience). How one expresses Racial Identity is related to a myriad of subjective experiences one has with race and the phenomenological meaning one assigns to being a member of that racial group (Sellers et al., 1998).

Black Racial Identity has been linked to childhood experiences with race, socializing forces or socialization patterns with other African Americans, and participation in African American organizations (Richman, Kohn-Wood, & Williams, 2007; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997; Sellers et al., 1998). Socializing forces include experiences of the individual, family, and group that provide a foundation for how race is viewed by the individual (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Martin, 2001; Thompson, 1999). In addition, subjective experiences with race have been defined as individuals' experiences with discrimination and racism (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). From these variables, one forms a cognitive and psychological perspective about one's race and the resulting meaning that racial classification holds; one forms a Racial Identity (Thompson, 1999). Specific to each individual are his or her Racial Identity attitudes, or the quantifiable beliefs that the individual holds about being an African American. According to Cokley and Helm (2007), researchers of multicultural issues in counseling extensively have assessed African Americans' Racial Identity attitudes.

Racial Identity in the current study. It has been suggested that Racial Identity and the Black Church have a symbiotic relationship, such that participation in one (The Black Church) influences attitudes in the other (Racial Identity) and vice versa (Frame & Williams, 1996; Martin, 2001). In addition, one's Racial Identity is said to inform participation in Black organizations like attending an all-Black college, where race is said to be supported by the environment (Gilbert et al., 2006). In this way, African Americans who strongly identify with their race are likely to engage in race-related activities such as attending an Historically Black College and University (HBCU), pledging in African American fraternities and sororities, or participating in religious organizations like church (Frame & Williams, 1996; Haley, 1964; Lincoln, 1984; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Mc

Rae et al., 1999; Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hook, & Stanard, 2008; Willis, 2001). For example, how an individual is socialized and the experiences one has as an African American will create that individual's Racial Identity. This individual may feel compelled, because of his or her Racial Identity views, to attend a Black Church. At the same time, the individual may attend a Black Church where racial empowerment is interlaced in the sermon, which may influence her or his Racial Identity. In this way, The Black Church and Racial Identity share an oscillating, symbiotic relationship. The author of this project created Figure 1, which illustrates a conceptual model of Racial Identity and its purported relationship with The Black Church, based on the literature.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Black Racial Identity and The Black Church



There have been a number of studies highlighting the social and psychological significance of Racial Identity for African Americans, (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Reese & Brown, 1995; Townsend & Lanphier, 2007), but few researchers have examined the influence The Black Church may have on someone's Racial Identity (Martin, 2001). Fewer still are the researchers who have sought to examine African Americans' Image of God (e.g., Calhoun-Brown, 1999; Cook, 2003, Muller, 2004), and how Racial Identity and The Black Church may influence this variable.

Image of God

Like Racial Identity, one's God-Image has been called a multidimensional construct with both cognitive properties, which are referred to as the God Construct, and emotive experiences, often referred to as the God-Image (Cook, 2003; Grimes, 2007).

Whereas some researchers have debated about the delineation of the God-Construct and God-Image (Grimes, 2007), other researchers have defined one's Image of God as having properties of both (Cook, 2003). For this reason, the literature examining one's Image of God has been empirically diverse, with researchers interpreting drawings of God (e.g., Muller, 2004) to researchers assessing God through a five-factor personality model measure (e.g., Cheston et al., 2003; Piedmont et al., 1997).

Researchers have found that the Image of God that an individual holds is the function of a number of interacting variables (Cheston et al., 2003; Hoffman et al., 2008; Muller, 2004; Piedmont et al., 1997), including parental representations and an individual's self-esteem. In an examination of 98 distressed clients in outpatient therapy, Cheston et al. (2003) found similarities between participants' Image of God and participants' image of themselves. Benson and Spilka (1973) found that participants with a high self-esteem had an Image of God that was loving, while participants with a low self esteem saw God as vindictive and controlling. Among 132 Anglicans, Greenway, Milne, and Clark (2003) found evidence that self-esteem and a general positive outlook in life influenced how participants imagined God.

Researchers also have found that there are anthropomorphic projections onto the God-Image (Kunkel, Cook, Meshel, Daughtry, & Hauenstein, 1999), particularly those based on participants' parental perceptions. In a sample of 18-22 year olds, Dickie et al. (2006) discovered that mothers influenced participants' Image of God and faith even into adulthood. Similarly, in her dissertation, Cook (2003) investigated group differences in father status (father present in the home vs. father absent in the home) among African American college women and the influence of the father-daughter relationship on Image

of God. Using the secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent attachment types outlined by Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) in their landmark psychological study of the strange situation, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) assessed participants' perceptions of their attachment to parent(s) and found that there was a positive relationship between a secure parental attachment and a loving Image of God.

Other variables have been implicated in influencing one's Image of God. Researchers have examined income (Dickie, Eshleman, Merasco, Shepard, Wilt, & Johnson, 1997; Roberts, 1989), gender (Foster & Keating, 1992; Lambert & Kurpius, 2004), and personality correlates (Bradshaw, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2008) as variables that may influence one's Image of God. Roberts (1989) found evidence that a disciplining view of God occurred more frequently among participants who were of lower SES, suggesting that income might influence self-esteem and one's God-image. In a study of personality correlates and one's Image of God, Piedmont et al. (1997) amassed a historiographic depiction of Jesus, who is thought to be the son of God among Christians. Piedmont et al. (1997) then used a five-factor personality model to determine that extraversion, openness to experience, and self-reported religiousness influenced one's having a favorable impression of Jesus. Further, in their review of the literature from different disciplines, Piedmont et al. suggested that a comprehensive examination of one's Image of God would involve three areas of inquiry: (1) primary interpersonal or the influence of parental figures; (2) secondary interpersonal or social institutions like faith communities, peers, and other relationships; and (3) self-sources, or the God-Image as a by-product of an individual's self-esteem. Figure 2 illustrates this suggested model.

Figure 2: Piedmont et al.'s (1997) Conceptual Image of God Model

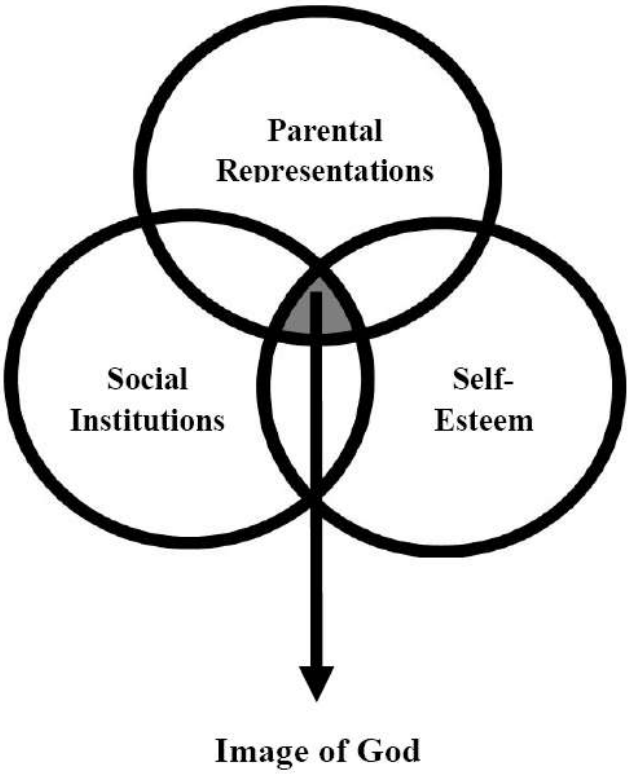


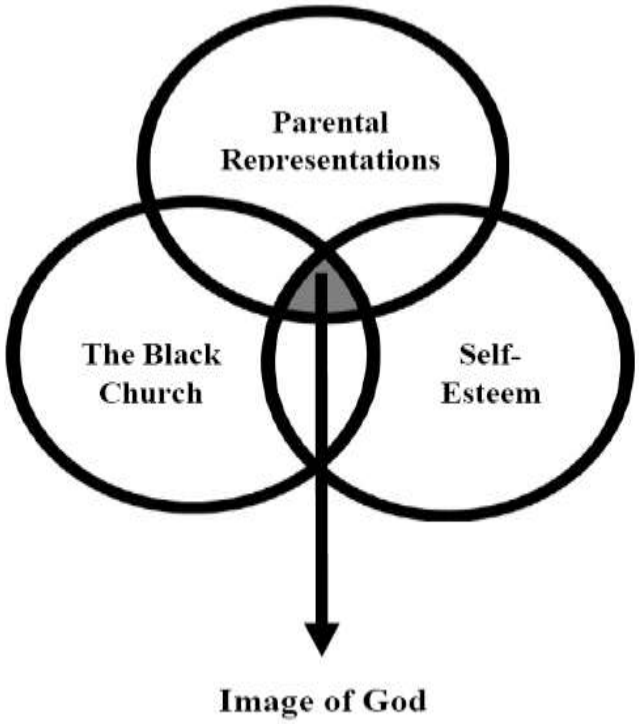
Image of God and African Americans. For African Americans, the God-Image has been complicated (Hartnell, 2008; Jones, 1998; Mays, 1969; Ohm, 2003; Walker, 2008; Williams, 1993). African Americans survived in hostile times and remain one of the only demographic groups in American history who experienced laws specifically designed to denigrate and dehumanize them (Schweninger, 2009).The religious history of this group has been just as complicated. Although they worshipped the same God as White Americans during and after slavery, African Americans were unable to worship *with* White Americans (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Raboteau, 2004; West & Glaude,

2003). Even currently, Sunday morning remains the most segregated day of the week (Cashwell, 2009). In addition, the Christian God often has occupied contradictory spaces within African American religious thought. God has been seen as both the liberator (Cone, 1970; Raboteau, 1994) and the oppressor (Jones, 1998).

Cultural differences in religious expression (Griffith et al., 1984; Hart, 2008, Newberg & Waldman, 2006), coupled with continued self-segregation, create the potentiality for a unique Image of God among African Americans. Particularly of interest is the Image of God of African Americans who attend what Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) called "those independent, historic, and totally Black controlled denominations, which were founded after the Free African Society of 1787 and which constituted the core of Black Christians" (p. 2), also known as The Black Church. One can find few empirical studies on Image of God with a majority African American sample in the current Image of God literature. The majority of findings have been based on White participants who identify as Catholic, and participants who do not reside in the South (e.g., Cheston et al., 2003; Dickie et al., 2006; Hoffman et al., 2008; Lambert & Kurpuis, 2004; Piedmont et al., 1997). The need to examine African Americans, who are less likely to be Catholic (Calhoun-Brown, 1999; The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008), and African Americans from the South, a regions of heightened religious activity (Chatters et al., 1999), is significant.

If we examine the Black Church as a social institution, then the proposed model of Image of God from Piedmont et al. (1997) in Figure 2 can be revised to be more culturally-specific; the Black Church becomes a social institution that may inform African American's Image of God.

Figure 3: Conceptual Model of African Americans' Image of God



Statement of the Problem

Although researchers have found that one's Image of God is a powerful construct that is influenced by self-esteem, gender, income, and personality correlates (Cheston et al., 2003; Dickie et al., 2006; Piedmont et al., 1997; Roberts, 1989), studies of African Americans' Image of God are sparse (e.g., Cook, 2004; Hoffman, Knight, Boscoe-Huffman, & Stewart, 2007; Muller, 2004). Similarly, few researchers have investigated the Black Church both as a variable that bridges two distinct theories (i.e., Racial Identity and Image of God) and as a variable that may influence African Americans' Racial

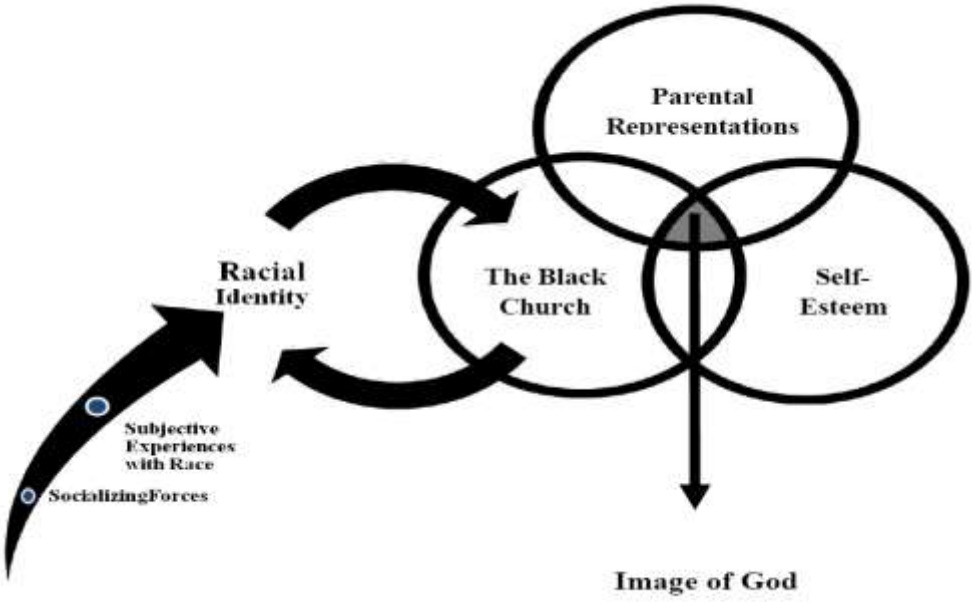
Identity and Image of God. In her dissertation on the God-image with abused and non-abused Caucasian and African American women, Muller (2004) elucidated that race alone is not a predictor for one's Image of God. In addition, Hoffman et al. (2008) recommended that researchers assess for Racial Identity as a potentially influential variable if researchers were to assess for African Americans' Image of God. Thus, as African Americans have been called a religiously feeling group that is spiritually inclined (DuBois, 1901; Frame, 2003; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990), and as The Black Church stands as an important spiritual and social monolith in African American culture (West & Glaude, 2003), the need to investigate this population (African Americans from the Black Church) and these pertinent variables (Image of God and Racial Identity) is predominant.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Image of God and Racial Identity of African American attendees of Black Churches. Based on the current literature, researchers have found that interacting experiences like socializing forces and subjective experiences with race inform one's Racial Identity (Murphy & Dillon, 2008; Sellers et al., 1997; Thompson & Carter, 1997). Likewise, scholars have suggested that one's Racial Identity influences participation in majority Black organizations like attending a Black Church (Frame & Williams, 1996; McRae, Thompson, & Cooper, 1999; Willis, 2001). Similarly, researchers have found that one's Image of God is influenced by subjective variables like self-esteem and parental representations (Cheston et al., 2003; Muller, 2004; Piedmont et al., 1997; Rizutto, 1979). Furthermore, Piedmont et al. (1997) suggested that one's Image of God also is based on social institutions like place of worship, peer groups, and faith community.

Thus, the proposed research model combines the multidimensional construct of Racial Identity with the multidimensional construct of Image of God. Where scholars have suggested one's God-Image is influenced by social institutions, the researcher has selected a specific type of social institution relevant to the African American population: The Black Church. The current conceptual model assesses The Black Church as a social institution that also might influence Image of God. As The Black Church has a symbiotic relationship with Racial Identity (Martin, 2001), there also might be components of Racial Identity in The Black Church and, thus, in an African American's Image of God.

Figure 4: Conceptual Research Model



The current investigation will use a mixed-methods approach to address participants' Image of God. Specifically, the Racial Identity of participants who attend a Black Church will be assessed through Sellers et al.'s (1997) Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity. In his survey of the literature on Image of God, Grimes (2007) wrote

that a number of investigations have focused on studying the adjectives people have used to describe their God-Image. Because Image of God is a construct that might exist outside of language (Gibson, 2007; Kunkel, Cook, Meshel, Daughtry & Hauenstein, 1999; Kwon, 2005), adjectives might not capture the variable adequately. For this reason, the current investigation seeks to identify participants' Image of God by qualitatively assessing their parental representation(s) and self-esteem through interviews, to be analyzed using Hill, Thompson, and Williams' (1997) Consensual Qualitative Research approach.

Whereas researchers have examined the God-image through pictures (Muller, 2004) and drawings (Dickie et al., 1997), the current investigation pairs a rigorous qualitative method (Morrow, 2007) with an empirically tested measure of Racial Identity. Hoffman et al. (2007) wrote that qualitative methods have an advantage over quantitative methods in that participants can express, freely and in their own words, their beliefs and experiences of God. In addition, Hoffman et al. (2007) suggested that using quantitative and qualitative methods in the same study provides researchers with richer information.

Concurrently, in their examination of the current literature in Image of God, Hoffman et al. (2007) suggested that researchers to date have focused too heavily on White samples that may, because of cultural and societal influences, image God differently from non-White samples. In light of the literature, there is a profound need to converge literature from three distinct fields of study (i.e., The Black Church, Racial Identity, and Image of God) and add depth to the studies that have been conducted. It is important to get into the language of African Americans who attend a Black Church to discover whether there are relationships between Racial Identity attitudes and

commonalities in the Image of God they might hold. This study is a first step along a research agenda, with future research studies incorporating different groups within the African American population (e.g., homosexual African Americans, single mothers, etc.).

Research Questions

1. How do African Americans who attend a Black Church describe their Image of God?
2. To what extent do they use similar language to describe their parents?
3. To what extent do they use similar language to describe themselves (i.e. self-esteem)?
4. What other variables influence their God-image?
5. How does the type of Black church (other-worldly vs. this-worldly) influence their God-Image?
6. How do Racial Identity attitudes influence attendance at and/or choice of a Black Church?
7. How do Racial Identity attitudes influence African Americans' God-image?

Need for the Study

It is important to the field of counseling and supervision to broaden our understanding of the God that African Americans worship and whether this God is a function of their Racial Identity attitudes and their attendance at a Black Church. Because the existing literature has relied on quantitative studies with majority Caucasian and Catholic participants, the researcher hopes to obtain in-depth analyses related to African Americans' God-image. Society may benefit from changes in counselor education literature and multicultural counseling curricula that address the potentially unique

relationship to God of African American church attendees. In addition, curricula and literature can begin to address the ways in which counselors and counselor educators may better target and understand this population and their religious and help-seeking behaviors. Because religion and spirituality are thought to be important for African Americans (Frame, 2003), and because most African Americans attend a Black Church (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008), it will be helpful for practitioners and educators alike to have more current ideas about the potential reasons why religion and the church are important to African Americans. For example, there may be something in the Black Church experience that influences African Americans' Image of God and Racial Identity, paramount variables that may supersede presenting concerns that are addressed in formal counseling relationships. Hence, this study may elucidate the kind of help that African Americans seek in the spiritual, social, and psychological realm and ascertain how we, as counselors and supervisors, can meet some of these needs within the confines of formal counseling relationships.

Definition of Terms

African American is a descriptive term that refers to descendants of African slaves brought to the Americas. In general, this phrase applies to and will be used interchangeably with Black American and Black in this study.

The Black Church refers to a church with a majority African American congregation, headed by an African American pastor, and led by a majority African American ministerial staff. Historically, the term "the Black Church" is applied with the Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) definition of "those independent, historic, and totally Black

controlled denominations, which were founded after the Free African Society of 1787 and which constituted the core of Black Christians" (p. 2)

God Construct refers to the cognitive structures one has constructed around God (i.e., what people think about God).

Image of God refers to the psychological, spiritual, cognitive, and affective image or representation of one's Higher Power. Because this study sampled Christian church-goers, the Image of God most often referred to in this study is the Christian concept of God, which includes references of Jesus. In this study, Image of God and God-image will be used interchangeably.

Parental Representation, in this study, is defined as an individual's psychological projection of traits of his or her parents onto the God-image (Piedmont et a., 1997).

Racial Identity is a psychosocial construct that amasses how one thinks and feels about one's race, and the resulting social arenas that one engages (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Sue & Sue, 2003). Additionally, researchers have argued that one's Racial Identity is a multidimensional construct influenced by situational salience. In the qualitative interview, Racial Identity is defined as what it means to be Black.

Racial Identity Attitudes are specific to each individual and represent the quantifiable beliefs that the individual holds about being an African American. For the purpose of this study, Racial Identity Attitudes are measured by Sellers et al.'s (1997) Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity.

Self-Esteem broadly refers to an individual's general sense of self-worth and self-confidence. In psychological terms, this concept refers to one's confidence, competence, and self-appreciation.

Social Institutions, in Image of God literature, refers to one's culture, faith community, or peers (Piedmont et al., 1997).

Subjective experiences with race include experiences with other Black Americans, experiences with other racial/ethnic groups, discrimination, racism, and attitudes about what it means to be a Black American (Sellers et al., 1998; Thompson & Carter, 1997).

Socializing Forces, as found in Racial Identity literature, comes from Thompson and Carter (1997, p. xv) and refers to family, peer, community, and educational groups (Frame, 2003; Sue & Sue, 2003). This terms is also used interchangeably with socialization patterns.

White is a descriptive term that refers to descendants of European immigrants. In general, this phrase applies to and will be used interchangeably with White American and Caucasian.

Brief Overview

This research study is composed of five chapters. The purpose of the first chapter was to introduce the concept of one's God-image, provide readers with a cursory review of the history of African American religion and The Black Church, and provide a brief introduction to Racial Identity attitudes and theory. In the second chapter, the researcher will examine all relevant literature on these topics. The third chapter will explain the

methodology involved in this mixed-methods analysis, with the fourth chapter comprised of domains, categories, core ideas, and frequency of responses. The fifth and final chapter will be a discussion of the results, implications for the field of counseling, limitations to the current study, and future directions for research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

When I found out I thought God was White, and a man, I lost interest. You mad cause he don't seem to listen to your prayers. Humph! (Walker, 1982, p. 202)

Overview

In the first chapter, we learned that Celie, our character who is on a journey of self-discovery, thought of her God as an old White man with a gray beard and blue eyes. Shug Avery, her archetypal mentor, both admonished Celie for her God-image and provided an explanation for why this God was ineffectual in Celie's life: he looked nothing like either of them. The literature on the religious beliefs of African Americans would support Shug Avery's claim. Researchers have found that African Americans who think of God as White and African American women who think of God as a male can experience psychological dissonance and spiritual disinterest (Akintunde, 1997; Higginbotham, 2003; Kaur-Mann, 2003; Williams, 1993). Hence, we return to Image of God as a powerful psychological construct. Piedmont et al. (1997) postulated that one's God-image consisted of parental representations, places of worship, and self-esteem. Additionally, in the first chapter, the researcher suggested that The Black Church influences one's Racial Identity, which consists of subjective experiences with race and socialization patterns with other African Americans; there might be components of Racial Identity in The Black Church and thus, in an African American's Image of God. The

current chapter will review relevant literature in the areas of African American religious history, including The Black Church, Racial Identity, and Image of God to make these theoretical suggestions more explicit.

The Black Church

The Black Church has been seen as a place of emotional, spiritual, psychological, and social support for African Americans, and has functioned in these roles for some time (Adksion-Bradley, Johnson, Sanders, Duncan, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Douglas & Hopson, 2001; Ellison et al., 2008; Frame & Williams, 1996; Gilkes, 1980; McRae et al., 1999; Lee, 1999; Taylor et al., 2000; Ward, 2005). Thought to be innately spiritually (Evans, 2008; Frame 2003), African Americans' religious activity has been reported to outnumber White Americans in church attendance at every age, income level, and educational level (Chatters et al., 1999; Hunt & Hunt, 2001; Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2008; Robinson, 2006; Taylor et al., 2001). According to a 2004 Gallup Annual Minority Rights and Relations Survey, 40% of 801 African American respondents attended church at least once a week, with an additional 15% attending church almost every week. This collective 55% of the African Americans polled exceeded Hispanic attendees (51% of 503 participants), and White attendees (44% of 816 participants). In addition, of all the major ethnic and religious groups, Black Americans have been more likely to report a formal religious affiliation and say that religion is somewhat or very important to them (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). Similarly, of the 3826 Black American participants polled in a survey of the religious landscape of the United States, 92% of respondents indicated affiliation with The Black Church, with some 60% of respondents indicating that they attended a Black Church in the South (The

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). Thus, statisticians have shown that religion appears to be a salient component of African American life, especially in the South.

The predominance of African American membership, pastoral staff, and cultural expressions of faith have given The Black Church its racial distinction (Genovese, 1974; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Raboteau, 2004). Examples of these cultural expressions expounded in the literature have included dancing or "shouting," vigorous preaching, rhythm and music, and collective call and response from the congregation to the pulpit (Gilkes, 1980; Griffith et al., 1984; Ellison et al., 2008; Haley, 1964; Newberg & Waldman, 2006; Welch, 2009; Willis, 2001). For this reason, The Black Church has existed within denominations that may have a White majority, including Baptist, Methodist, African Methodist Episcopalian (AME), Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Seventh Day Adventist, Holiness, and Pentecostal (Adksion-Bradley et al., 2005; Calhoun-Brown, 1999; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990) denominations. Further, one can find elements of racial empowerment within denominations.

In her examination of Black Theology, racial empowerment, and political behaviors of African Americans, Calhoun-Brown (1999) argued that African American Baptist and Methodist churches were more race conscious, as they were founded during slavery in direct response to racism and discrimination from White church-goers (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Calhoun-Brown said that in these churches, there are higher levels of racial solidarity and potentially higher levels of militancy. Because Holiness and Pentecostal churches emphasize affective, extraverted, and experiential types of worship, Calhoun-Brown said that these churches could be perceived as otherworldly, or focused

on the afterlife rather than on current social issues. This religious orientation (i.e., otherworldly) is one that Calhoun-Brown called detrimental to racial empowerment. Finally, Calhoun-Brown asserted that Catholic African Americans and African American attendees of churches with majority White congregants might have weaker desires for empowerment because they are willing to affiliate with institutions that are controlled by "non-Blacks" (p. 203). The history of African Americans, particularly racial segregation, slavery, and the religious history of African Americans might lend credence to some of Calhoun-Brown's claims.

African Americans and the History of Slavery

African American religious history has involved the ethical conundrum of a group of enslaved people accepting the religion of their captors (Hart, 2008). Slavery brought Africans to a continent where their values were denigrated and their identities eradicated (Chireau, 2003; Raboteau, 2004). Similarly, African slaves were introduced to Christianity and the socially constructed, caste-like concept of race (Wright, 2000), with White Americans using the fact that slaves were darker as justification for White American superiority and African enslavement (Schwinenger, 2009). It is against a racial foreground that European colonists demoted Native Americans and African slaves to the background, established their Manifest Destiny, and perpetuated social and economic superiority (West, 2001; Wright 2000). Although the18th and 19th centuries saw an era of rapid population expansion (Schweninger, 2009), West (2001) argued that the construct of race served as a unifying agent for the European influx, as "without the presence of Black people in America, European-Americans would not be 'White'—they would be only Irish, Italians, Poles, Welsh, and others engaged in class, ethnic, and gender

struggles over resources and identity" (p. 156). These struggles included the debate about whether Christianity, with its emphasis on a personal savior, would incite slaves to thoughts of equality through religious brotherhood and freedom (Oakes 1986; Pitman 1926). For this reason, Christianity was used as a tool for social control to foster meekness and subservience among the African slave converts (Evans, 2008; Richards, 1993).

Systematically stripped of an identity, ancestors of those who would become African Americans assumed the socially sanctioned Christian identity (Genovese, 1974; West & Glaude, 2003). African slaves felt an affinity between their sufferings and the sufferings of the Christ and the children of Israel (Raboteau, 2004). In this way, it became the responsibility of Christian ministers to make real and applicable to a disenfranchised people the same God who oversaw the overseers. Thus, the God of the slaves would have to look different and function differently than the God of the slave masters (Raboteau, 2004). Hence, the birth of The Black Church, that "nation within a nation" (Frazier, 1963, p. 35) still thought of as a monolithic panacea for Black Americans (Billingsley, 2008; Evans, 2008). Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) explained:

> For African American Christianity, the Christian God ultimately revealed in Jesus of Nazareth dominated the Black sacred cosmos. While the structure of beliefs for Black Christians were the same orthodox beliefs as that of White Christians, there were also different degrees of emphasis and valences given to certain particular theological views. For example, the Old Testament notion of God as an avenging, conquering, liberating paladin remains a formidable anchor in the faith in most Black churches. The older the church or more elderly its congregation, the more likely the demand for exciting imagery and the personal involvement of God in history is likely to be. The direct relationship between the holocaust of slavery and the notion of divine rescue colored the theological perceptions of Black laity and the themes of Black preaching in a very decisive manner, particularly in those churches closest to the experience. (p. 3)

The God of the slave church was a blend of the active God of the Old Testament and the liberal teachings and loving-kind acquiescence of the crucified Christ (Lincoln, 2003; Welch, 2009; Williams, 1993). In fact, ministers hoping to eviscerate the legacy of slavery, segregation, and second-class citizenship post-slavery would espouse that African Americans were the chosen of God (Billingsley, 1999; Noel & Johnson, 2005; Wilmore, 1998). In this way, the psychological and emotional liberation of an oppressed group of people was the onus of African American ministers (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). In fact, Higganbotham (2003) argued, in her gendered perspective of religion, that Christianity was the biggest form of "racial self-help" (p. 187) for African Americans.

Because Christianity and the church offered slaves educational and political opportunity, it is from the church that we see the organization of African Americans as a nationality (Genovese, 1974), as a religiously feeling group (Raboteau, 2004), and as a point of political contention (West & Glaude, 2003). It was where slaves were *allowed* to congregate. Thus, the church became a synecdoche for the whole of Black America (West & Glaude, 2003). In his landmark text, *The Black Church in America*, Frazier (1963) said that the church provided an African American with a structured social life and a place where one "could give expression to his deepest feeling and at the same time achieve status and find a meaningful existence" (50). The Black Church provided "refuge in a hostile White world" and "offered a means of catharsis for their pent up emotions and frustrations" (p. 50). A combination of worship and rhythm, slaves who gathered for church services (sometimes surreptitiously) experienced emotional catharsis through

rhythm and music and physical release through shouts and dances (Lincoln, 1984; Noel & Johnson, 2005).

The Black Church and Social Activism

Bound by a shared cultural history of slavery and the problematic contradiction of this chattel system in a country touted to be the land of the free and home of the brave, legislatively, African Americans transitioned from savages, to property, to three-fifths of a human, to separate but equal until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (West, 2001). In her examination of Black empowerment, theology, and Image of God, Calhoun-Brown (1999) argued, "the sociopolitical meaning of religion has always been different for Whites and Blacks" (199). For this reason, Calhoun-Brown asserted that African Americans who attend majority African American services are privy to culturally different religious expressions, sermons, and messages tailored to empower and encourage. Given the contradictory conception of Christianity among African Americans (i.e., its use as a means of social control), scholars have debated whether Christianity is an other-worldly focused, compensatory religion, one that suppresses racial disappointments and projects eternal happiness to an afterlife (Evans, 2008; Hartnell, 2008; Haley, 1964; Raboteau, 1994; West & Glaude, 2003).

In juxtaposition, researchers also have found The Black Church to be the seedbed of activism and change. In her three-year ethnographic examination of a predominantly African American neighborhood in Chicago, Pattillo-McCoy (1998) attributed The Black Church as the mechanism that invigorated activism among Blacks in the neighborhood. Pattillo-McCoy based this assertion on her extensive observation of a number of

organizations within the predominantly African American neighborhood, of which Black Churches were a part. In addition, Pattillo-McCoy conducted 31 open-ended, in-depth interviews that revealed participants' belief that God was active in earthly affairs supported their secular activism. Often it was in churches that members heard from politicians and were informed of candidates' platforms. Additionally, Pattillo-McCoy noted that Pastors often were invited to political organizations to bless the event. Indeed, scholars have examined the symbiotic relationship between the church and the civic community (Baldwin, 2003; Calhoun-Brown, 2003; Douglas & Hopson, 2001; Smith, 2003). Harrison, Wubbenhorst, Waits, and Hurt (2006) called The Black Church a social service agency, linking members of the community to everything from economic resources to educational opportunities.

Therapeutic Components of The Black Church

Like Pattillo-McCoy (1998), researchers seeking to investigate The Black Church have done so mainly though qualitative interviews (e.g., Constantine, Miville, Warner, Gainor, & Lewis-Coles, 2006; Griffith et al., 1984, McRae et al., 1998; McRae et. al, 1999; Nelson, 1997), or through analyzing national databases such as the National Survey of Black Americans and the General Social Survey (Ellison et al., 2008; Hunt & Hunt, 2001). One can argue, however, that both types of studies have limitations. Often, qualitative results are not generalizable. In addition, analyzing data gathered in surveys contributes quantitative information to the literature, but these studies have used data from as far back as 1974 into the mid to late 1990s, when social conditions in the Unites States were markedly different.

Qualitative researchers have provided depth to the literature, however. For example, in their qualitative examination of 20 members of an Urban Black Church in New Haven, Connecticut, who were observed at home and assessed using semi-structured interviews, Griffith et al. (1984) found that the particular Black Church from which they sampled functioned as a place where members met both their spiritual and social needs. The Church used in this study offered services on Sunday and on Wednesday for a midweek service. Participants were those who attended half or more of the midweek services for a period of eight weeks. In the course of their interviews, Griffith et al. noted similarities between response codes and Yalom's (2005) group characteristics, such as the instillation of hope, group cohesiveness, altruism, and social learning. A critique of these findings is that researchers sampled from individuals based on the frequency of their church attendance. These members could be said to have higher social and spiritual needs, which prompted them to attend the Sunday and midweek service. In this way, these themes may have been easier for the researchers to identify.

McRae, Carey, and Anderson-Scott (1998) sought to expand on Griffith et al.'s (1984) suggestion that elements of The Black Church resemble the benefits of an experiential group, as outlined by Yalom (2005). Additionally, these researchers sought to underscore a systems theory framework with The Black Church experience for African Americans: Black Churches operate as dynamic, open bodies and institutions that adapt, change, and interact within their environments. The authors posited that Black Churches meet all criteria of a system, including "the presence of boundaries, autonomy, hierarchy, mechanisms to maintain the system, and organizing structures that are common across different components of the system" (p. 780). In this conceptual piece, the authors listed

The Black Church as a place of group cohesion, social support, self-disclosure, and catharsis. The authors concluded that The Black Church has been the place of psychosocial reprieve.

In another study, McRae, Thompson, and Cooper (1999) enlisted 84 participants (mean age = 49) in seven focus groups (length 1.5 to 2 hours) from Baptist, African Methodist Episcopalian, and Episcopalian Black Churches within the New York metropolitan area. The authors hypothesized that one could apply a group theory framework to explicate what members experienced as a result of participating in The Black Church. Based on information that was transcribed from the focus groups, the seven-member research team used Miles and Huberman's (1984) Conceptually Clustered Matrices to codify Yalom's (2005) 11 group characteristics into four main themes. The authors explained these themes to be relevant to the Black religious experience, including the idea of church as family (e.g., a sense of belonging and cohesion), spiritual renewal (e.g., surrendering to the power of God), interpersonal learning, and empowerment.

Nelson (1997) immersed himself into the culture of one church in his year-long examination of an AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Attending Sunday morning and evening services, midweek services, bible study, and revival, Nelson took field notes and utilized audio and video tapes to record the church's activities. Nelson conducted his research through informal interactions with church members, four interviews with the Pastor of the church, and in-depth interviews with 20 members. Nelson recalled how the Pastor of the church would use metaphors, like telling people they were the vessel of God, to empower and encourage church members. Nelson also revealed that members expressed their experiences of the supernatural, including

shouting, speaking in tongues, and having prophetic dreams, which all were perceived as being therapeutic. In her examination of African American folk beliefs and their role in the therapeutic process, Parks (2003) suggested that these behaviors (i.e., shouting, speaking in tongues, and having prophetic dreams) were integral components of African American spiritual culture. Hence, a counselor who assesses for the power that African American clients give to words, their spiritual lives, and their dreams can deepen rapport, legitimize the client's faith, and get inside the worldview of African American clients.

Understanding his participants' worldview, Nelson (1997) also recalled how church members viewed the neighborhoods surrounding the AME church, with its poverty, violence, and racial discrimination, as a battle of God versus the devil. Nelson reported paranormal and practical aspects to the church members' beliefs also; church members started mentorship programs to eradicate crime rates (practical) and marched around the neighborhood mimicking the biblical account of Israelites who marched around the walls of the city of Jericho until they crumbled down (paranormal). Although Nelson attributed these heightened supernatural beliefs and practices to the fact that more than half the people in the neighborhoods surrounding the AME church lived below the poverty line, Nelson also highlighted that Church members exhibited their faith by tithing 10% of their income to the church; at times, the supernatural superseded the practical. The influence of SES in religious expression is an area of inquiry that is not assessed frequently by empirical researchers (Chatters et al., 1999). In addition, given the area (i.e., South Carolina), it is safe to argue that the church in Nelson's study, which was located in a Southern state thought to be on the Bible belt, also might have influenced beliefs in religious supernaturalism (Chatters et al., 1999; Hunt & Hunt, 2001).

Indeed, there tends to be an externalized component of The Black Church (Hart, 2008), such that participation in The Black Church has been likened to the cathartic and vicarious learning experiences that one may have while participating in an experiential group (Griffith et al., 1984; McRae, Carey, & Anderson-Scott, 1998; McRae, Thompson, & Cooper, 1999). Scholars have called the externalized worship practices found in Black Church services extraverted releases for the psychological traumas of racism and discrimination (Douglas, & Hopson, 2001; Ellison et al., 2008; Haley, 1964; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Willis, 2001). In their article addressed specifically to counselors that also underscored the importance of The Black Church within the lives of African American church attendees, Adksion-Bradley et al. (2005) acknowledged The Black Church as "the pulse of the African American community, attending to the social, psychological, and religious needs of African Americans" (p. 147). To use the authors' language, this "pulse" beats as a result of African Americans' religious history and the history of The Black Church.

Conclusion

Researchers have documented the historic strength and mammoth presence of The Black Church (Billingsley, 1999; Wilmore, 1998). Further, based on statistical data, with more than 92% of African Americans saying that they attend a Black Church, one could argue that an African American entering into a counseling relationship will have had some exposure to and participation in a Black Church (Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2003; The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). Because researchers in the counseling field have investigated The Black Church from the group and systems level (McRae et al., 1998; McRae et al., 1999), needed is an exploration of the potential

influence this organization may have on psychosocial constructs that influence the individual, namely, Racial Identity and Image of God.

Racial Identity

Scholars have argued that one's Racial Identity is a psychosocial construct amassed of how one thinks and feels about one's race and the resulting social activities that one engages (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Sue & Sue, 2003; Thompson, 1999). Racial Identity theory posits that Racial Identity is influenced by interactions within the mainstream society mixed with experiences of the heritage culture (Sellers et al., 1998, Sue & Sue, 2003; Thompson, 1999). Rather than defined as an isolated, biological concept (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999), Racial Identity has been called the cognitive and psychological attachment one has with the social category of race (Thompson, 1999). Further, researchers have found that one's Racial Identity is a multidimensional construct influenced by situational salience (Gilbert, So, Russell, & Wessel, 2006; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Sellers et al., 1997). Variables said to influence Racial Identity salience, beyond the social experiences of the individual, family, and peer group, include "economic conditions, government policies and procedures, size and concentration of the group, and political ideologies" (Thompson, 1999, p. 749).

The ways in which researchers have defined Racial Identity have shifted. Prior to the late 1960s, Racial Identity was thought to be the result of a group identity based upon a stigmatized status (Sellers et al., 1998). Researchers theorized that African Americans needed to devalue their race in order to be successful in the United States. Sellers et al. (1998) reported that this approach, while fruitful in initiating research tailored to African

Americans, promoted an idea of self-hatred among African Americans. The reconceptualization of Racial Identity as a culturally dynamic construct emerged in the literature in the 1960s (Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin, & Wilson, 1998). Individuals were viewed as having varying attitudes and beliefs associated with being a Black American (Sellers et al., 1998), such that, despite experiences with oppression, there had been "positive cultural influences that may help Blacks shape a healthy self-concept without first having internalized a negative view of self" (Constantine et al., 1998, p. 96). In this way, Racial Identity became a process of formulating healthy beliefs about being an African American and healthy beliefs about African American culture.

Assessing Racial Identity

In attempting to codify and operationalize the evolving construct, researchers measuring Racial Identity have experienced similar growing pains (Sellers et al., 1998). In their survey of the literature, Cokley and Helm (2001) reported that while vast, Racial Identity research has produced inconsistent findings. The authors reported that this has been due to theoretical and methodological limitations. In addition, Constantine et al. (1998) noted that critics of Racial Identity measures have commented on the possible role that Racial Identity might play in African American racism against White Americans (Constantine et al., 1998). To date, however, Racial Identity has been the most researched topic with African Americans in multicultural counseling literature (Cokley & Helm, 2007). For example, Racial Identity has been implied to influence African Americans' academic achievement (Ogbu, 2004; Smalls, White, Chavous, & Sellers, 2007), depressive symptoms (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007), moral development (Moreland & Leach, 2001), parent-child relationships (McHale, Crouter, Kim, Burton, Davis, Dotterer,

& Swanson, 2006), participation in church (Calhoun-Brown, 1999; Reese & Brown, 1995), personal insight (Abrams & Trusty, 2004), political voting behaviors (Sullivan & Arbuthnot, 2007), psychological well-being (Pierre & Mahalik, 2005), self-efficacy (Collins & Lightsey, 2001), and self-esteem (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997; Johnson, Kurpius, Rayle, Arredondo, & Tovar-Gamero, 2005; Phelps, Taylor, & Gerard, 2001; Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998).

Cross Racial Identity Theory. Cross (1971) conceptualized Racial Identity as a developmental process of becoming Black, or transitioning from an unhealthy view of African Americans to a more positive view of African Americans. The stages associated with this model were preencounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. In the preencounter stage, the individual espouses to Euro-American ideas, often denigrating Black culture (Cross, 1978). This could include accepting stereotypic portrayals of African Americans and being unhappy that one is African American (Simmons, Worrell, & Berry, 2008). The encounter stage is marked by an event or experience that challenges beliefs and practices of Euro-American genuflection (Constantine et al., 1998). Cross (1978) said, "the encounter stage describes a shocking personal or social event that temporarily dislodges the person from his old worldview, making the person more receptive (vulnerable) to a new interpretation of his identity and his condition" (p. 17). An individual in this stage might begin to express pro-Black sentiments. Cross (1978) called the next stage, immersion-emersion, the "vortex of psychological metamorphosis" (p. 17), or a place of transition where previously held beliefs about Euro-Americans are denigrated and one adopts pro-Black sentiments. In addition, it is in this stage that individuals might feel compelled to improve issues within

the Black community (Constantine et al., 1998). Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, and Worrell (2001) reported that the Immersion-Emersion stage is composed of two different sub-stages, what they identified as intense Black involvement and anti-White attitudes.

On the other side of the immersion-emersion stage, Cross theorized that individuals would reach the internalization stage of Racial Identity. In this stage, the individual's beliefs and opinions about Black Americans and Euro-Americans become more integrated. Cross (1978) argued that, in this stage, the individual attains a pluralistic perspective. In the final stage, internalization-commitment, the individual maintains the pluralistic perspective and, at the same time, the individual is compelled to work to make advances for the group. Cross (1978) wrote that the "'self' (me or 'I') must become or continue to be involved in the resolution of problems shared by the 'group' ('we')" (p. 18).

In the internalization-commitment stage, we see how Cross's model incorporates a group collectivism approach thought to be the cornerstone of African American culture (Constantine et al., 1998). Likewise, Cross's model has been called the "predominant paradigm in the counseling literature" (Cokley & Helm, 2007, p. 144), and has been converted into scales used to assess Racial Identity attitudes. Building on Cross's assumptions, Parham and Helms (1981) converted Cross's theory into an assessment, the Racial Identity Attitudes Scale-Black (RIAS-B). The RAIS-B is a 50-item, 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) that assesses attitudes one might hold about being Black along four of the five theorized stages in Cross's model. The four assessed stages are the preencounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization

stages. The RAIS-B has been used widely. In their survey of the literature, Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, and Fhagen-Smith (2002) reported that the scale has been used in approximately 50 studies since 1981. Hargow (2001) applied Parham and Helms' (1981) Racial Identity Attitude Scale as a framework in working with African American clients, specifically African American males. Hargow elaborated that this scale, "stresses the importance of significant emotional events that are typically related to deep-seated racial biases and stereotypes as well as tensions and emotions between Blacks and Whites" (p. 223).

Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity. Responding to what they described as a need to address the role of salience in identity, Sellers et al. (1998) created the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). Sellers et al. (1998) reported that the underlying assumptions of the MMRI were that identities have stable components. Likewise, identities are influenced by situations. More specifically, the authors wrote that African American Racial Identity "has dynamic properties that are susceptible to contextual cues and allow the stable properties of the identity to influence behavior" (p. 23). Another assumption of the MMRI is that individuals hold multiple identities that are hierarchically ordered. The authors reported that the MMRI recognizes subjective perceptions of one's Racial Identity as the most important indicator of the person's Racial Identity. Finally, the authors reported that the MMRI validates the meaning one assigns to being Black.

From this theorized model, Sellers et al. (1997) created the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). Operationalized from Sellers et al.'s (1998) MMRI, the MIBI is a 56-item, 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*)

that assesses one's Racial Identity along three domains: centrality, regard, and ideology. Sellers et al. (1997) reported that Centrality measures the extent to which an individual normatively defines himself or herself by race. The authors posited that this aspect of Racial Identity has situation stability. Regard is defined as the individual's evaluative and affective judgment about his or her race. On the MIBI, regard is composed of two subscales: public and private. Public regard is defined as the extent to which the individual believes others view African Americans positively or negatively. Private regard is defined as the extent to which the individual feels positively or negatively about being an African American. The authors posited that this aspect of Racial Identity has situation stability also.

Ideology is defined as the individual's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes about how African Americans should act. Sellers et al. (1997) reported that ideology operates along four areas of functioning: "political and economic development, cultural and social activities, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group" (p. 27). On the MIBI, ideology is composed of four subscales: nationalist, oppressed minority, assimilation, and humanist. The nationalist subscale stresses the importance and uniqueness of being a Black American. The oppressed minority subscale emphasizes the similarities between the oppression that African Americans have experienced with other groups who have been oppressed. The assimilation subscale emphasizes the similarities between African Americans and the rest of American society in an attempt to enter into the mainstream. Finally, the humanist subscale emphasizes similarities among all humans.

Since its creation in 1997, the MIBI has been used in 19 studies and 20 dissertations. More specifically, the MIBI has been used in conjunction with studies measuring academic achievement (Neblett et al., 2008; Smalls et al., 2007), depressive symptoms (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007), gender differences in racial ideology (Rowley, Chavous, & Cooke, 2003), political behavior (Sullivan & Arbuthnot, 2007), self-esteem (Goodstein, & Ponterotto, 1997), and the racial identity of teenagers (Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyên, 2008). In addition, the MIBI has been used with non-African American samples. Johnson et al. (2005) wanted to investigate if the Centrality Scale, the extent to which people normatively define themselves by the racial group, and if Regard Scales, the affective and evaluative judgment placed on the racial group by the individual, could be used with other groups of people. With a total sample of 876 freshmen at a Southwestern University, the authors assessed these scales of the MIBI along with the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). The RSE is a 10-item, 4-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) that assesses an individual's beliefs and attitudes of self-confidence and competence. The demographics of the sample were 598 European American, 112 Latino American, and 41 Native American students. These student participants were part of a larger longitudinal study that assessed the academic persistence of incoming freshmen at a large University.

Johnson et al.'s (2005) research questions were if the scores on Centrality and Regard scales were reliable with different racial groups, if scores on the centrality and regard scales would positively relate to self-esteem, and if there would be group and gender differences between the scales. In this study, self-esteem and centrality were positively related for Native Americans (r =.37, p =.01). Native Americans students who

normatively describe themselves by their race had a higher self-esteem. Self-esteem and Private Regard were positively related for European Americans (r =.19, p =.001) and Native Americans (r =.28, p =.01). European Americans and Native Americans who felt positively about being a member of the racial group also had higher self-esteem. Public regard was also positively related to self-esteem for European Americans (r =.23, p =.001), Native Americans (r =.33, p =.038), and Latino Americans (r =.13 p =.01). The authors suggested that, for Native, Latino, and European American students, self-esteem seems to be related to how other people see them as a group. Based on their findings, the authors found moderate support for the construct validity of the MIBI. These findings suggest that the MIBI is a measure that can assess how someone normatively defines him or herself to a racial group and how someone evaluates membership within their racial group.

Racial Identity and Counseling. Given the reticence that African Americans may have about entering into formal counseling relationships (Ayalon & Young, 2005), Racial Identity has been implicated as an influential variable in the success of the counseling relationships with African Americans (Richman et al., 2007; Sue & Sue, 2003). Hargow (2001) suggested that Racial Identity is an important variable to assess in counseling, especially when counselors are working with African Americans; Racial Identity could influence reception to counseling and counselor preference. In their landmark study on Racial Identity and counselor preference, Parham and Helms (1981) found evidence that Racial Identity attitudes did predict preference for counselor's race. The authors recruited participants from an introductory psychology course and an introductory Black History course at an urban private university. Participants completed

the Racial Identity Attitude Scale, a 10-item 5-point Likert measure (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) that listed frequently occurring issues that influence people to seek counseling, and a question about counselor preference by race.

Parham and Helms (1981) reported that African Americans in the preencouter stage of Racial Identity (i.e., a worldview that emulates White Americans and denigrates Black Americans) were less likely to prefer a Black counselor ($\beta = -.47$, $p < .005$) and more likely to prefer a White Counselor ($\beta = .32$, $p < .005$). Participants holding an encounter Racial Identity attitude (i.e., person is reinterpreting previously held assumptions about emulating White Americans and denigrating Black Americans) were more likely to prefer a Black counselor ($\beta = .18$, $p < .05$). The authors suggested that African Americans whose Racial Identity attitude progressed to an inner security with Black values were less likely to prefer a Counselor merely based on race. Participants who were in the earlier stages of Racial Identity attitudes were more likely to prefer a Counselor based on his or her race alone. Given the p-value of this statistic (i.e., $\beta = .18$, $p < .05$), the authors did not exhibit very strong statistical support for this claim.

Contrary to Parham and Helms' (1981) findings, with a sample of 76 Black college students (52 women and 24 men) attending a predominantly White college in the Eastern portion of the United States, Helms and Carter (1991) examined Racial Identity attitudes and counselor preference. Participants were given the Racial Identity Attitude Scale – B. Additionally, participants were given an inventory that assessed counselor preference. Within the sample of Black students, the authors reported that Black students' Racial Identity attitudes predicted their preference for a Black Counselor, $F(4, 71) = 3.26$, $p < .025$. Specifically, the authors found strong support that the more integrated a

person's Racial Identity (i.e., the internalization stage) the more likely Black participants were to prefer a Black Counselor $\beta = .36$, $F(1,69) = 12.29$, $p < .001$. Evaluated with Parham and Helms (1981), it would appear that, among students in this sample, students did prefer the counselor because he or she was Black. The authors did not find a significant relationship between Black participants' Racial Identity attitudes and preference for a White counselor.

Wallace and Constantine (2005) investigated the possible role that an adherence to afrocentric cultural values may have in African American help-seeking behaviors. The authors defined afrocentric cultural values as "communalism (i.e., emphasizing the importance of human relationships and the interrelatedness of people), collectivism (i.e., placing priority on group goals instead of individual or personal ones based on family and ethnic group norms), and unity, cooperation, harmony, spirituality, balance, creativity, and authenticity" (p. 370). The authors cited family members, close friends, and trusted community members as those African Americans may consult for help. The sample consisted of 251 (147 women and 104 men) undergraduate and graduate students at a Northeastern University and was comprised mostly of first year undergraduate students. The authors used several scales in this study, such as a scale to assess for Africentric values, a scale to assess attitudes about seeking professional psychological help, and a scale to assess the stigma associated with receiving psychological help. The authors reported founding significant gender differences on the attitudes about seeking professional psychological help scale, such that data were separated and analyzed by gender.

Among women, the authors found that participants reporting higher Africentric scores also had higher perceived stigma about counseling, $F(1, 145) = 18.23$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .11$. Because eta squared informs researchers of effect size, or on the strength of the relationship between the variables in question and the practical applicability of the variables, .11 can be called a low effect size. Among men, higher Africentric scores positively predicted perceived counseling stigma, $F(1, 102) = 4.81$, $p < .05$, $eta^2 = .04$. Higher Africsentric scores were not related to favorable attitudes about seeking professional therapeutic help. Rather, the authors reported that higher Africentric scores were more predictive of perceived counseling stigma. These findings, while modest, suggested that African American college students who identify with Africentric cultural views might be reluctant to share personal concerns with a therapeutic helper. This was consistent with other researchers' findings that African Americans underutilize mental health resources based on cultural beliefs and Racial Identity attitudes (Ayalon & Young, 2005).

In another study, Helms and Richardson (1994) tested Racial Identity attitudes among 52 African American male undergraduates who attended a predominantly White university in the eastern portion of the United Stated. Participants were recruited from psychology and African American studies courses. The authors used the male participants as surrogate clients, having them watch two 15-minute counseling segments of a White Counselor. Participants then completed Parham and Helms' (1981) Racial Identity Attitude Scale –B. The authors also used a measure to assess the counselor's credibility in the session. The form consisted of 12-items and assessed counselor's expertness, attractiveness (how much the counselor resembles the respondent) and credibility.

Participants also completed the Counseling Reactions Inventory, a measure created for this study to assess immediate reactions to the counselor with respect to willingness to disclose, comfort, and anxiety. The authors reported that the Counseling Reactions Inventory is a 9-item, 5-point Likert measure (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Finally, participants rated the counselor's ability to deal with clients from diverse ethnic and cultural groups. The authors reported that the premise of this study was that Racial Identity was observable. Male surrogate participants rated the counselors based on the video tapes.

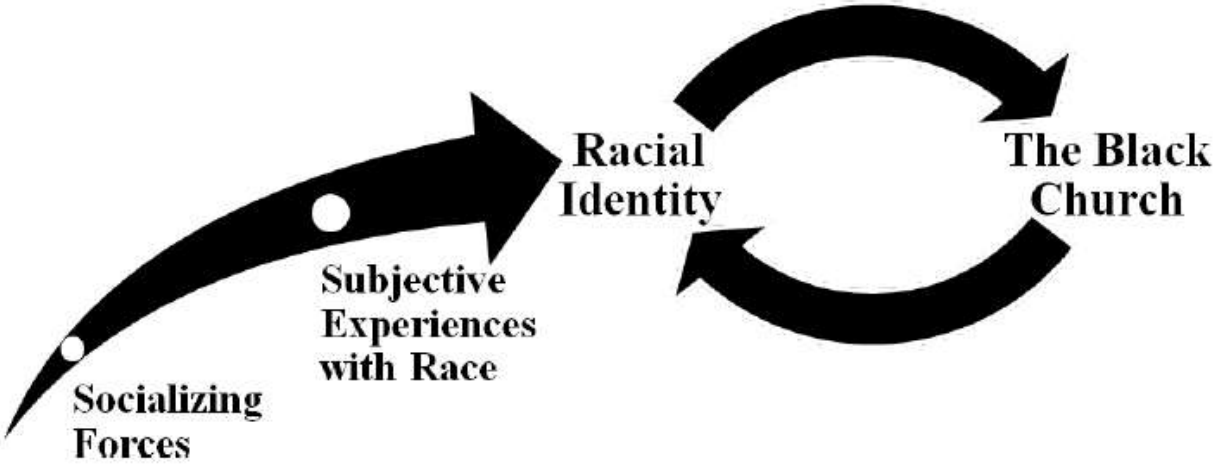
Helms and Richardson (1994) found that higher levels of encounter attitudes (i.e., a worldview that is less Euro-centric in which the individual may espouse to pro-Black sentiments) were predictive of negative reactions to counseling ($\beta = -.38$, $p = .0008$). The authors used this statistic as evidence that participants who espoused to encounter Racial Identity attitudes were more likely to say that the surrogate client felt anxious about the counseling experience. The authors did not find significant relationships between Racial Identity attitudes and the counselor's expertness, attractiveness, and credibility. The authors also did not find significant relationships between Racial Identity attitudes and participants' perceptions of the counselor's cross-cultural competency. Although these authors sought to address gaps in the literature concerning counselor preference of a particular demographic within the African American population (i.e., African American males), one could question the simulated, analogue nature of this study and the problematic task undergraduate students had with assessing a counselor's rapport-building and cultural competence based on 30-minutes of interaction.

Current Investigation

A major limitation to studies on Racial Identity is that most, if not all, have been based on college undergraduates (Hargow, 2001; Helms & Carter, 1991; Helms & Richardson, 1994; Parham & Helms, 1981; Wallace & Constantine, 2005). Additionally, as Cokley and Helm (2001) suggested, researchers' methodologies have complicated the applicability of research findings. If we are to adopt Thompson's (1999) view that Racial Identity is also a cognitive process, then the developmental level of undergraduates, who are in late adolescence/early adulthood, must be considered (Ivey, Ivey, Myers, & Sweeney, 2005).

Racial Identity is comprised of socializing forces, like parental messages, which provide the foundation for how race is viewed by the individual (Martin, 2001; Thompson, 1999). Likewise, Racial Identity is comprised of an individuals' experience with discrimination and racism, or their subjective experiences with race (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). From these interacting variables, one forms a cognitive and psychological perspective about one's race and the subjective meaning it holds; one forms a Racial Identity (Thompson, 1999). Racial Identity and the Black Church have been suggested to have a symbiotic relationship, such that participation in one (The Black Church) influences attitudes in the other (Racial Identity) and vice versa (Frame & Williams, 1996; Martin, 2001). In addition, one's Racial Identity is said to inform participation in Black organizations, like attending an all-Black college, where race is said to be supported by the environment (Gilbert et al., 2006), Recall Figure 1 as the conceptual model of Black Racial Identity and The Black Church based on the literature.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Black Racial Identity and The Black Church



African Americans have been found to exhibit high church attending behaviors (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008; Winesman, 2004). Likewise, researchers have underscored the importance of religion and spirituality in the lives of African Americans (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Raboteau, 2004). Although there has been a breadth of scholarship on the subject of African American religious behaviors and Racial Identity separately, very few studies have examined the influence of Racial Identity on African Americans' religious beliefs and behaviors like attending a Black Church (Martin, 2001). Needed is an examination of the variables said to influence Racial Identity.

Socializing Forces and Racial Identity. Socialization patterns include experiences of the individual, family, and group, and have been hypothesized to influence

Racial Identity salience (Demo & Hughes, 1990; Thompson, 1999). For example, Thompson (1999) sought to examine variables that might affect Racial Identity salience among African Americans. She hypothesized that racial socialization and interactions with other African Americans predicted African American Racial Identity salience. Thompson also hypothesized that experiences with discrimination would predict the salience of African American Racial Identity. Thompson's sample consisted of 208 African American women and 201 African American men from the St. Louis metropolitan area. The majority of the participants in Thompson's sample had a high school diploma and some college education, with an average age of 39.5 years and a median income between $20,000 to $ 21,000. This suggests some variability in the data, as the median provides information about the middle number in the spread but not the average of the spread. Thompson created multiple items to measure socialization (i.e., families' attitudes about race), social networks (i.e., participation in African American activities and groups), experiences of racism, level of integration, political activism, Racial Identity salience, and Racial Identity attitudes.

Thompson (1999) used a self-constructed instrument, the African American Multidimensional Racial Identity Attitude Scale, to measure Racial Identity attitudes. Thompson reported that this instrument was a 24-item scale with four subscales that measured positive Racial Identity attitudes. The four subscales were physical, sociopolitical, cultural, and psychological. Readers were not given a definition of what these scales measured. Thompson reported that high scores on the measure indicated positive identification with African American racial group identification. Thompson found α = .84, .81, .80. and .92, respectively, for each of the subscales of the instrument.

Analyzing her data with hierarchical multiple regression analyses, Thompson reported significant relationships between racial salience and racial socialization, $t(276) = 3.62$, $p < .01$, African American social networks, $t(276) = 4.71$, $p < .01$, and political activism, $t(276) = 4.14$, $p < .01$. These findings suggest that individuals who received positive messages about being Black also were likely to report higher racial salience, more African American social networks, and higher levels of political activism. Thompson's second hypothesis, that experiences with discrimination would predict salience of African American Racial Identity, was not supported by the data in this sample. This finding is contrary to findings of other researchers, which will be discussed in the **Subjective experiences with race** portion of this review. Thompson's examination shed light on the importance of the many social factors that could influence the salience of Racial Identity.

Additional researchers have examined the influence of the primary learning institution, the family, on Racial Identity (Neblett et al., 2008). Townsend and Lanphier (2007) examined family influences on the Racial Identity of children. The authors recruited from a community with lower socioeconomic status, high crime, and high drug activity. Children in the sample were in the 4th through 6th grade in a majority (97%) African American school. Using 52 parent and child dyads, the authors administered several assessments that took children 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete and parents 45 minutes to complete. The authors used a scale to measure parental locus of control, a 47-item measure with subscales that measured parental efficacy, parental responsibility, and parental control. In addition, the authors used a 30-item measure with scales that assessed families' social support, cognitive reframing, spiritual social support, and mobilizing the family. The authors also used a 32-item measure that assessed family cohesiveness and

adaptability. To measure Racial Identity, the authors administered a 9-item measure with a 3-point Likert scale (1 = *disagree* to 3 = *agree*) that measured children's' Racial Identity in terms of physical appearance, competency, and behaviors.

Townsend and Lanphier (2007) found that parent's age ($\beta = .31$, $p = .05$), family adaptability ($\beta = .32$, $p < .05$) and cognitive reframing of negative interactions ($\beta = -.43$, $p < .05$) were moderate predictors of children's Racial Identity attitudes. Townsend and Lanphier (2007) defined family adaptability as open communication and clear family roles. The authors reported that cognitive reframing of negative interactions indicated individuals who did not attribute personal variables to shortcomings (e.g., I am a failure). Instead, these individuals viewed shortcomings as more of a result of external forces (e.g., I was not selected because of racism). The authors noted that there are not many measures that assess children's Racial Identity. For this reason, the authors reported that the results should be taken with caution. These results indicated that messages learned in the family and experiences outside the family can be influential in shaping a child's Racial Identity.

Citing a dearth of longitudinal studies on racial socialization and Racial Identity, Neblett, Smalls, Ford, Nguyên, and Sellers (2008) used a longitudinal approach (Time 1 and Time 2) to examine parental messages about race. The authors recruited from a medium sized public school district in the Midwestern United States in the spring of 2002 and spring of 2003. Although 465 respondents participated at Time 1, at Time 2, the authors had a total 348 African American respondents (144 males and 214 females) from middle to high school. Demographic questions gathered information about participants' age, gender, grade in school, parent's education, and parent's income. To test for racial

socialization, the authors created a Likert scale of 0 (*never*) to 2 (*more than twice*) for participants to indicate the frequency that their parents gave messages of racial pride (e.g. "you should be proud to be Black"), racial barriers (e.g., "Blacks have to work twice as hard as Whites to get ahead"), egalitarian messages (e.g., "you should try to have friends of all different races"), messages of self-worth (e.g., "you can be whatever you want to be"), and negative messages (e.g., "Told you that learning about Black History is not important") for the study (p.194). Additionally, the authors included a racial socialization behaviors subscale that assessed the frequency of socialization behaviors and/or activities with other Black people (e.g., "Bought you books about Black people") (p.194). The authors used the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al., 1997) to measure Racial Identity. Because the MIBI measures the significance one places on race and the meaning one attributes to being a member of a racial group, the authors felt this measure would fit well into their study with parental messages.

From a cluster analysis, Neblett et al. (2008) created a three-class model to explain the relationship between racial socialization and Racial Identity. The authors named the first cluster "High Positive" (p. 196). Respondents in this group had high means along the lines of racial pride, socialization, and self-worth messages, and below average means on negative messages. This group included 36.6% of the sample. The authors named the second cluster "Moderate Positive" to identify relatively moderate scores that were near the sample means; they reported that 40.8% of the sample fell into this cluster. The authors named the final cluster Low Frequency to denote low scores (on average, at least one standard deviation away from the mean) on most of the measures. Through further analysis, the authors found that racial socialization was associated with

race centrality, $F(2, 340) = 4.35$, $p < .05$, partial eta squared =.3. The authors found moderate support that how someone normatively defines him or herself as being Black was linked to parental messages. The authors also reported that at Time 2, the High Positive cluster had the highest level of race centrality, indicating a shift in Racial Identity perspective over one year. Interestingly, the authors found gender differences in Racial Identity attitudes, reporting that boys were more likely to endorse an assimilation ideology (i.e., promote mainstream ideas) than girls were. The authors reported age differences in the sample at Time 2 such that high school students were more likely to endorse a nationalist ideology, suggesting gender and potential developmental differences in racial ideological beliefs. This study both underscored the influence of parental messages in how students identify and gain meaning from being Black and suggested changes in Racial Identity attitudes as students grow and mature.

Cunningham (1997) also underscored the importance of parental messages in creating a sense of community and Racial Identity for African Americans in her qualitative analysis of the Racial Identity formation of 11 light-skinned Black Americans. Cunningham used a demographic form and conducted semi-structured interviews that lasted an average of 60 minutes to assess Racial Identity, family, and societal influences. A major limitation in this study is that Cunningham interviewed participants and identified themes without being under a clear umbrella of qualitative research methodology. Additionally, Cunningham analyzed her data without the assistance of an external auditor or a research team. Cunningham identified themes of awareness of belonging to a racial group, but not looking like anyone in the racial group. Additional

themes were feelings of exclusion, the choice to be Black, and the realization that Racial Identity is an ongoing process.

All participants in Cunningham's (1997) sample identified as African American. Cunningham indicated that the criteria for participation in the study was that participants were either light-skinned, had been perceived as mixed-race, or struggled with not feeling "Black enough" because of the color of their skin (p. 381). Researchers have expanded on colorism, or racial biases among African Americans based on the lightness of skin tone, and its psychological ramifications (Bogle, 2003; Thompson & Keith, 2001). Several participants in Cunningham's (1997) sample explained that identification into the African American group could be complicated by appearing to be *not* Black. Cunningham highlighted participants who felt invisible to both Blacks and Whites because they did not appear to be Black. Respondents recalled facing accusations from other African Americans of not being Black enough. Cunningham further explained that participants felt confusion and discomfort based on recollections of Whites who were uncertain of their race. Cunningham extrapolated that race for this subgroup involved a choice based on socialization experiences and parental messages. That is, depending on how being African American was viewed in the home, the participant may have chosen to say "I am African American" (p. 398) and espouse to whatever behaviors and cultural activities this identity conveyed to the participant. Ironically, because race has been defined as a social construct based on phenotypic classifications, this study suggested the importance of racial socialization as an influential component of Racial Identity in the face of seemingly contradictory phenotypical conditions (i.e., looking White). Racial Identity, therefore, provides more psychologically codifiable information than simply assessing one's race.

Subjective Experiences with Race. As a demographic, African Americans native to the United States, that is, individuals whose cultural ancestry has roots in slavery, tend to be aware of racism and discrimination (West, 2001), variables said to define subjective experiences with race (Thompson & Carter, 1997). Specific to African Americans, Goodstein and Ponterotto (1997) reported Racial Identity and ethnic identity were important variables. Sampling from African American and White American students, Goodstein and Ponterotto (1997) wanted to examine whether there were differences between racial and ethnic identity, if racial and ethnic identity were related to other group orientations (defined as attitudes toward interacting with out-group members), and whether racial and ethnic identity were related to self-esteem. The total sample consisted of college students in the northeastern United States, 126 of whom where Black (34 male, 92 female, mean age 23.51 years) and 292 of whom were White (95 male, 187 female, mean age of 22.95). The authors used the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Parham & Helms, 1981; RAIS), the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-W; Helms & Carter, 1990), the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MIEM; Phinney, 1992), and Roseberg's Self Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965) to assess for Racial Identity, ethnic identity, and self-esteem. The MEIM is a 14-item, 4-point Likert that assesses responses from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*. Using correlation analyses, the authors reported a modest relationship between internalization and self-esteem among African Americans (r =.35, p < .05). This means that African Americans who embraced an integrated Black Racial Identity were more likely to have reported high self-esteem. In addition, the authors found a strongly negative relationship between pre-encounter stage and self-esteem (r =-.38, p <.001), such that anti-Black attitudes were associated with

lower self-esteem. The authors found no significant relationships between Racial Identity, ethnic identity, and self-esteem with White participants. These findings suggested that experiences with race and ethnicity influence the African American psyche in a way that is not generalizable to White Americans.

Scholars have expanded on this difference in experience and psychosocial development, suggesting that the African American stratum differs from that of White America (Haley, 1964; Wilmore, 1998; Willis, 2001). The notable argument is that African Americans compare themselves against a real or supposed White American standard, creating a two-ness or double consciousness, a Black self pitted against a White (read American) self (DuBois, 1901; Morrison, 1992; West 2001). These psychological comparisons play out in a way that influence experiences with race. For example, researchers of academic achievement and Racial Identity have reported on the concept of cultural capital, or the idea of the dominant culture holding like currency, the ways and means of success (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Wildhagen, 2009). Additionally, Ogbu elaborated on the "burden of acting White" (Ogbu, 2004, p. 9) as it related to African American students' identity and academic behaviors. In his sociohistoric survey, Ogbu (2004) outlined how African Americans survived in American culture:

> Black Americans became bi-cultural and bi-dialectical during slavery because they lived and worked in two different worlds, which expected them to think, act, and react in a particular way, depending on where they found themselves. In the Black community and among themselves, most Blacks felt at ease to talk and do things they would never attempt in a White environment. Conversely, in a White environment, Blacks talked and behaved as White people expected, which would be inappropriate in the Black community (p. 9).

Ogbu iterated that while slaves adopted White speech and diction, these were not behaviors or attitudes that White slave owners required. Rather, Ogbu posited, Whites wanted Blacks to act in ways that perpetuated the societal myth that Blacks were ignorant and therefore more suitable to manual labor. For their survival, Ogbu suggested that the different ways that Blacks spoke and acted in front of Whites were ways of passing. In terms of appearance, in the years after slavery, African Americans who were lighter-skinned could pass as White in order to attain better living conditions and economic opportunities (Schwinenger, 2009; Wright, 2000). The avid fascination with Blacks and passing even inspired famous American authors like James Weldon Johnson, Gertrude Stein, E. E. Cummings, Charles Chesnutt, Nella Larsen, and Kate Chopin. In the current era, Ogbu (2004) noted that passing has transitioned to a perceived need of "acting White" (p. 24) in order to attain a better way of life. Such a stance could be seen as an act of betrayal by other African Americans (p. 24).

Smalls, White, Chavous, and Sellers (2007) examined negatively internalized attitudes about being Black, acting White, and subsequent academic behaviors of African American students. Among a sample of 390 African American 7th through 10th graders in the Midwest that was largely female (56.2%) and largely comprised of 7th and 8th graders, Smalls et al. used the ideological and centrality scales of the MIBI. The authors also used a scale to assess students' oppositional academic identity, a three-item, three-point Likert scale measure (1 = *not at all true* to 3 = *very true*). A sample item from this scale included, "I feel I must act less intelligent than I am so other students will not make fun of me" (p. 310). Additionally, the authors used a subscale to measure students' day to day

experiences with racial discrimination. Examples from this 17-item 6-point Likert scale measure (0 = *never* to 5 = *once a week or more*) included 'having your ideas ignored" and "called a name, harassed" (p. 312). The authors also gathered information about average grades achieved and academic curiosity to examine within group variation of academic performance and Racial Identity.

Smalls et al. (2007) found that students who reported experiencing more discrimination also reported acting less intelligently in school (r =.16, $p < .01$). Additionally, students who reported experiencing more discrimination were more likely to espouse to a pro-Black sentiments (i.e., a nationalist ideology) (r =.12, $p < .05$) and have higher race centrality (r =.12, $p < .05$). In contrast to Thompson (1999) who found that experiences with discrimination did not relate to Racial Identity, these authors found that students who reported experiencing more discrimination were more likely to espouse to a pro-Black ideology and normatively define themselves as Black. A possible explanation for this may be that race is more salient to these individuals, who therefore become more sensitive to interactions that could be interpreted as discriminatory. An alternate hypothesis could be that these students might have experienced higher levels of discrimination, which in turn made them embrace pro-Black sentiments and normatively define themselves as being Black as a coping mechanism.

Using hierarchical regression, Smalls et al. (2007) found that students who experienced more discrimination were also the students who espoused to an assimilation ideology, or a desire to absorb into the mainstream ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$). The authors also reported that students who espoused to an assimilation ideology reported lower levels of academic curiosity ($\beta = -.09$, $p < .06$). From their findings, the authors reported that

assimilation views hindered students in terms of academic achievement. Because assimilation focuses on adopting mainstream views as opposed to African American views, the authors inferred that students who experience discrimination might be more hurt by the experience, causing a rippling effect of maladaptive and oppositional behaviors in school. Similarly, these students may experience a dissonance with assuming beliefs of the mainstream while balancing concerns about how they will be viewed by their peers, which could influence self-esteem.

Among a sample of 173 college students and 72 high school students, Rowley et al. (1998) sought to investigate the relationship between Racial Identity and self -esteem. Using the Centrality and Regard scales of the MIBI and the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, the authors found moderate support that high racial centrality (respondents indicating that being Black was central to their identity) moderated the relationship between private regard and self- esteem ($r = .08$, $p < .05$) with the college sample. In addition, the authors reported that private regard was a significant predictor of self-esteem ($\beta = .29$, $p < .05$). Hence, how someone feels about being Black (positively or negatively) influenced how positively or negatively the individual felt about himself or herself. Arguably, as college is a novel time of interacting with different individuals, an individual's evaluative judgment about what it means to be Black might be confronted in this transitional time.

In addition to self-esteem and experiences with discrimination, researchers have measured group differences between African Americans and Africans. Seen as a whole and not the sum of their parts, both African Americans and Africans would appear as Black Americans. Culturally, however, one group is native to the United States (i.e.,

African American), while the other group immigrated (i.e., African). Phelps, Taylor, and Gerard (2001) examined the Racial Identity, cultural mistrust, and self-esteem of African American and African college and graduate students. The sample consisted of 160 undergraduate (88%) and graduate (13%) students at a predominantly White Southeastern university. The authors' sample consisted of 26 Africans, (mean age 30.38), 110 African Americans (mean age 21.84), and 24 West Indian/Caribbean students (mean age 21.27). The authors used a one-way multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to investigate group differences. The authors used the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem scale to measure self-esteem. In addition, the authors used a 48-item, 10-point Likert assessment to measure Blacks' mistrust and suspiciousness of Whites along four domains: politics and law, interpersonal relations, education and training, and business and work. Likert items ranged from zero = *not in the least agree* to 9 = *entirely agree*, with higher scores representing more mistrust of Whites. Finally, the authors assessed Racial Identity attitudes with the Racial Identity Attitudes Scale-B (Parham & Helms, 1981; RIAS-B).

Phelps et al. (2001) found that African American students were more likely to engage in behaviors involving socializing with their own racial group and participating in cultural traditions as opposed to interacting with other ethnic groups different from their own, $F(2, 149) = 6.36$, $p < .03$. Using a one-way ANOVA, the authors found no differences between groups on self-esteem. Although African Americans accounted for a majority of sample and would therefore absorb more variance in the data, these authors did expose how differences in ancestry can influence Racial Identity attitudes, perceptions of group identification, and interactions with other groups. Based on these

findings, the author of this current study posits that the African experience in America necessitates that African Americans congeal and seek out culturally specific resources like attending a Black Church. The author of the current study also posits that something about the congealing and seeking out of culturally specific resources addresses a component of the African American experience not easily gauged in formal counseling relationships or in the quantitative literature (Ayalon & Young, 2005; Bierman, 2006; Constantine et al., 2006; Farris, 2006; Ford, Harris, & Schuerger, 1993; Harley, 2005), but one that might be addressed in all-Black organizations like the Black Church.

Consistent with Phelps et al.'s (2001) rationale for their sampling frame, Bagley and Copeland (1994) found ethnic differences in stress and Racial Identity between Africans and African Americans. From a sample of 82 graduate students at a large Midwestern university (34 African and 48 African American), Bagley and Copeland tested participants' Racial Identity Attitudes using the RAIS-B (Parham & Helm, 1981) and problem-solving strategies, using a 35-item measurement with a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly agree* to 6 = *strongly disagree*). The authors also assessed stress experienced in a demographic question. The authors found differences in Racial Identity development between African Americans found to be in the internalization stage and Africans found to be in the preencounter stage. The authors reported that African Americans had a significantly higher mean on the internalization scale of the RAIS-B (M = 50.2) than did the Africans (M = 47.8, p =.0299), suggesting that the African Americans in this sample were more integrated in their Racial Identity development than Africans. A Chi square analysis indicated that African Americans experienced more stress than African graduate students (χ^2 = 6.839, p =.009). Viewed together, Phelps et

al. (2001) and Bagley and Copeland's (1994) research suggest that not just minority status, but a shared cultural past may influence how African Americans experience and develop in the world.

Similarly, in their sample of 215 self-identified African American undergraduate college students (mean age = 19.17 years) from a large public university in the Southeastern portion of the United States, Utsey et al. (2008) reported that African Americans were at a higher risk for experiencing life stress and adversity due to ecological and institutional factors. The authors reported that African Americans were "more likely to live in poverty, experience prolonged unemployment, be incarcerated, become homeless, live in high-crime neighborhoods, and have fewer financial resources" than White Americans (Utsey et al., 2008, p. 49). The authors added to these ecological difficulties experiences with discrimination and racism, which could be damaging both psychologically and physiologically. The authors hypothesized that psychological resources (i.e., optimism), social resources (i.e., family) and cultural resources (i.e., racial pride and religiosity) would buffer the effects of stressful life events, race-related stress, and psychological distress.

To test their theory, Utsey et al. (2008) created a stress-suppressing structural equation model. Among variables that measured race-related stress, life stress, cultural resources, and social resources, the authors found that sociofamilial resources, or behaviors learned and/or observed within the family system, buffered the effects of race-related stress, illustrated in the inverse statistic ($\beta = -.27$). Counterintuitively, people who reported higher levels of race-pride and religiosity also reported higher levels of race-related stress ($\beta = .82$). The authors suggested that race may be more salient to these

individuals, who therefore become more sensitive to interactions that could be interpreted as racially stressful. An alternate hypothesis that the authors offered was that these individuals might have experienced higher levels of discrimination and stress, which in turn made them embrace racial pride and religiosity as a coping mechanism. The results of this study indicated that the interaction between subjective experiences with race and socialization patterns with race can influence the strength of one's Racial Identity and perhaps influence heightened participation in cultural activities, like a Black Church.

Racial Identity and Race-Related Behaviors. Scholars and researchers have posited that African Americans who strongly identify with their race (i.e., have a positive or integrated Racial Identity) are more likely to engage in race-related activities (Frame & Williams, 1996; Haley, 1964; Lincoln, 1984; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRae, Thompson, & Cooper, 1999; Willis, 2001). One such activity is attending an all-Black college. Among a sample of 154 African Americans attending a Historically Black University (HBU), Gilbert et al. (2006) reported that psychological distress might result from situations where African Americans are in the minority; none of the students in this sample reported psychological distress. The authors used their findings to imply that, at an HBU, African Americans may be "buffered from psychological stressors and even strengthened by their experience in an educational environment in which most of their peers…are African American" (p. 118). The authors underscored the importance of a support system to cope against a potentially harmful world of racism.

Another race-related activity that is said to buffer the psychological distress of race is participation in religious organizations, in particular, the church (Farris, 2006; Higginbotham, 2003; Lee, 1999; Raboteau, 2004; West & Glaude, 2003). It has been

suggested that sermons and activities in African American churches are tailored to address the African American experience (Calhoun-Brown, 1999). From their personal interviews with Black clergy representing 2150 churches, Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) reported that 63% of Black Church clergymen said the Black Church had the same mission as the White Church. Lincoln and Mamiya also reported that 64% of Black Church clergymen said that their sermons addressed components of Black consciousness. To explain this contradiction, for one must assume that White clergymen are not giving sermons that address components of Black consciousness, the authors said, "The issue of an ambivalent Racial Identity among Black children presents a major challenge to the claims of the Christian message of The Black Church that salvation brings wholeness to human personalities and a healing to broken lives. The command to love your neighbor as yourself is rendered problematic without self-acceptance" (p. 320). Here the authors spoke of Racial Identity as self-acceptance and having a sense of pride and confidence with being Black, a definition that also mirrors the definition of self-esteem. The authors also suggested that members of Black clergy are in unique positions to instill these messages within congregants.

Reese and Brown (1995) sought to understand if religiosity and messages heard at one's place of worship influenced the development and feelings of system blame, or the "belief that the responsibility for the group's status lies in the economic or governmental rather than the personal realm" (p. 25). By analyzing data from the 1984 National Black Election Survey, an inter-university consortium of social and political research funded through the University of Michigan, the authors hypothesized that women would be more religious than men, older people more religious than younger people, and participants

with higher income would be less religious. The authors also hypothesized that those who attended church more frequently would be more likely to hear messages about upcoming elections and political activism; likewise, these participants would have higher levels of belonging and identify with the group. Based on correlation analyses, the authors found that participants who were most likely to attend services and see religion as important were older, more affluent women. Additionally, the authors found that higher incomes led to greater civic and political awareness and ultimately to increased Racial Identity.

From their findings, which were counterintuitive to hypotheses, Reese and Brown (1995) suggested that those participants with higher income were likely to have greater Racial Identity, producing perceptions of power imbalance and ultimately system blame. Cross's theory (1978) would say these participants were in the internalization-commitment stage. Hence, these people were likely to be the ones to coalesce and desire to make a difference in the community. In terms of limitations of this study, women have been found to be more religiously involved than men, regardless of race (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). Secondly, not only is the sample in the above study dated, speaking to the social conditions of African Americans of 1984, the authors tended to view Racial Identity from a group think or a group solidarity perspective. Although there are social components to one's Racial Identity, there are also internalized messages and behaviors associated with Racial Identity, making it a psychological construct (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007).

Chae, Kelly, Brown, and Bolden (2004) examined the psychological construct of ethnic identity and spiritual development among 198 participants (42 Latino American, 44 African American, 47 Asian American, and 65 White American) from a Catholic

University in the Northeastern portion of the United States. The authors hypothesized that there would be a relationship between ethnic identity development and spirituality. Ethnic identity development was measured using 14-items from Phinney's (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measurement (MIEM). Spirituality was assessed intrinsically (e.g., the intrinsic aspects of the particular religion or spiritual practice that an individual engages) and extrinsically (e.g., the extrinsic goals and objectives people seek to attain through spiritual involvement, like feeling a sense of "inner peace" or "alleviating anxiety") (p. 20). The authors also hypothesized that spiritual orientation would best predict ethnic orientation.

Chae et al. (2004) found that ethnic group membership had a significant main effect on ethnic identity, $F(3, 190) = 11.25$, $p < .0001$. That is, codifying as a member of an ethnic group explained differences in the data of how one scored their ethnic identity. The authors also reported that ethnic group membership had a significant main effect on intrinsic spirituality, $F(3, 190) = 20.9$, $p < .001$. Extrinsic spirituality contributed to significant variance in ethnic identity ($\beta = -.142$, $T = -2.84$, $p < .005$). Given the negative beta weight associated with this finding, the authors revealed that there might be an inverse relationship between extrinsic spirituality and ethnic identity. In this study, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino Americans scored higher on intrinsic spirituality opposed to White Americans. However, because the authors did not report demographic information about the religious backgrounds and current religious affiliation of the participants, it is difficult to infer if the direction of these spiritual beliefs and practices (i.e. intrinsic vs. extrinsic) are the result of ethnic identity, ethnic group

membership, or other social variables that were not examined, such as religious denomination.

Arguing that "many African Americans have been reared with exposure to religion, spiritual convictions, and a belief in God or a higher power" (Sanchez & Carter, 2005, p. 281), Sanchez and Carter (2005) examined social variables including age, religious denomination, Racial Identity attitudes, and religious orientation among African American college students. The authors had 270 participants (73 male, 197 female) from two and four year northeastern colleges and universities. Racial Identity was assessed via Parham and Helms' (1981) RAIS scale. Religious orientation was assessed using a 32-item, 9-point Likert measure (1 = *strongly agree* to 9 = *strongly disagree*) that assessed the direction of respondents' religious orientation on three scales: extrinsic, intrinsic, and quest. The authors explained that the extrinsic scale measures the extent to which other people and the external social environment influence religious orientation. The intrinsic scale measures an individual's personal beliefs. Finally, the quest scale measures whether an individual's religious and/or spiritual beliefs include open-mindedness. The authors also measured age, social class, education level, membership in religious organizations, frequency of religious attendance, and religious denomination. In this sample, 24 respondents identified as Catholic, 119 respondents identified as Baptist/Methodist/Protestant, 36 respondents identified as Spiritual, 35 respondents identified as Christian, 17 respondents identified as Other, and 39 respondents identified as having no religious denomination. The authors found that individuals who attended religious organizations a few times a year or less had higher levels of Intrinsic religious orientation, $F(4, 265) = 14.32$, $p < .05$. Although results indicated significant differences

in Racial Identity attitudes by denomination, the authors explained that subscale differences affected Type I error, or finding significance when none exists, which made these results not interpretable.

Additionally, Sanchez and Carter (2005) found that Racial Identity attitudes significantly predicted scores on all three religious orientation subscales. More specifically, an internalized or integrated Racial Identity was inversely related to an intrinsic religious orientation ($\beta = -1.3$, $p < .05$). That is, the more integrated someone's Racial Identity, the more he or she engaged in religious activity with the external environment. The authors also found gender differences; men were more likely to espouse to an internal religious orientation the more they integrated their Racial Identity ($r = .14$), while women were less likely to espouse to an internal religious orientation the more they integrated their Racial Identity ($r = -.21$). Similarly, the more women integrated their Racial Identity, the less they espoused to an open-minded exploration of religious orientation ($r = -.13$). Men were the opposite ($r = .13$). Women who espoused to endorse African American beliefs and attitudes while withdrawing from White culture (Immersion/Emersion) were more likely to have an internal religious orientation ($r = .14$). Men scoring high on Immersion/Emersion were less likely to have an internal religious orientation ($r = -.13$). Overall, men and women who scored high on Immersion/Emersion were less likely to have an extrinsic religious orientation ($\beta = -.04$, $p < .05$).

These results indicated that Racial Identity influenced the direction of African American religious orientation. That is, African Americans who endorse African American beliefs and attitudes while withdrawing from White culture were more likely to

have an internal religious orientation, perhaps relying on internal resources to buffer individual experiences. Likewise, it would appear that women were more likely to hold an external religious orientation the more integrated their Racial Identity became. Men were more likely to hold an internal religious orientation the more integrated their Racial Identity became. This finding could explain the difference in church attendance between Black men and Black women that have been noted by researchers, as Black women have been reported to attend church at higher frequencies than Black men (Chatters et al. 1999; Ward, 2005; Williams, 1993). These findings would suggest that further studies be conducted examining Racial Identity and religious participation between men and women. Moreover, they elucidate the need to examine religious organizations, specifically The Black Church, and Racial Identity.

In her doctoral examination of the Black Church, parental demographics, and Racial Identity attitudes, Martin (2001) found support for the current argument that The Black Church, particularly a socially active Black Church, influences Racial Identity. Martin examined 201 adults from 20 African American churches in the Lansing, Michigan, and Detroit, Michigan, area. Martin revealed that 85% of the people in the sample were female, the average age of the sample was 40 years old, and the median income was $42,000. A majority of participants in the sample were married (55.8%), employed in a professional setting (40.2%), had two children (36.7%), and had a graduate degree (26.4%). In this study, Martin used the ideology subscale of the MIBI to measure Racial Identity attitudes. Martin assessed for parental socialization messages about race with a 14-item, 5-point Likert (1 = *never* to 4 = *all the time*) instrument that measured racial socialization patterns along two scales: integrative/assertive attitudes (racial pride,

importance of Black heritage, try to understand Whites, stand up for rights), and cautious/defensive attitudes (social distance, deference, Whites have the power). Martin used the African American Church Scale (AACS) to measure the type of African American church in which the participant was a member. Based on research from Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), Martin converted open-ended questions that were given to clergy members into a 15-item, 6-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The scale was created with two subscales to measure the other-worldly vs. this-worldly and the communal vs. privatistic orientations of the African American church tradition.

In general, churches that have an other-worldly orientation tended to be churches that emphasize the universality of Christian suffering and the idea that a heavenly reward will compensate for injustices suffered while on earth. An example from the instrument is "In my church race of Jesus (God) is not an issue" (p. 83). This-worldly churches focus on pride in being an African American and the oppressions and tensions that are happening in the adjacent community and larger society. This-worldly oriented churches seek an activist approach to alleviate these oppressions and tensions. An example from the instrument is "In my church, my culture/ethnicity are represented in the religious icons and materials such as stained glass windows, images of Jesus and other religious figures, and Sunday school material" (p. 83). The communal vs. privatistic orientation measured the degree to church programs and community outreach measures were promoted and implemented by the church. Examples of these items included "My church focuses only on the spiritual development of its congregation" (Privatistic) (p. 83) and

"My church participates in activities which promote Black Pride such as Kwanzaa and Black History month" (Communal) (p. 83).

In this sample, Martin (2001) found moderate support that participants who perceived their church as this-worldly vs. other-worldly were more likely to espouse to a nationalist, or pro-Black, racial ideology ($\beta = .26$, $p < .05$). Moreover, Martin found that participants who were more educated were more likely to espouse to a this-worldly orientation ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$). Likewise, participants who were more educated were likely to espouse to nationalist Racial Identity ideology ($\beta = .06$, $p < .05$). Participants who perceived their church as communal were more likely to integrate positive racial messages into their parenting style (i.e., an integrative/assertive approach), ($r = .16$, $p < .01$). Similarly, participants who perceived their church as this-worldly were likely to espouse to integrative/assertive socialization patterns with their children ($r = .18$, $p < .05$). Martin reported that participants who espoused to cautious/defensive socialization patterns (i.e., social distance, Whites have the power) were more likely to perceive their church as privatistic ($r = .13$, $p < .05$). Interestingly, Martin also reported that individuals who espoused to cautious/defensive socialization patterns were likely to perceive their church as this-worldly ($r = .17$, $p < .05$) and other-worldly ($r = .09$. $p < .05$), a contradictory finding. Hence, although this study underscored the influence of The Black Church in Racial Identity ideology and in how parents socialize their children based on race, the messages that parents related to their children about race (i.e., socialization patterns) seemed to be influenced by variables other than the ones that have been assessed through quantitative measures.

Conclusion

As seen in this section, quantitative studies have provided useful information to the literature, like how Racial Identity is influenced by socialization patterns (Cunningham, 1997; Thompson, 1999), subjective experiences with race (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997; Smalls et al., 2007), and religious behaviors (Martin, 2001; Reese & Brown, 1995; Sanchez & Carter, 2005). Needed, however, is an in-depth analysis of these complicated variables from individuals' perspectives and in an individual's own words. Racial Identity is an important, multidimensional construct and has been found to be influenced by a myriad of interacting variables (Abrams & Trusty, 2004; Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Calhoun-Brown, 1999; Collins & Lightsey, 2001; Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997; Johnson et al., 2005; McHale et al,, 2006; Moreland & Leach, 2001; Ogbu, 2004; ; Phelps et al., 2001; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; Reese & Brown, 1995; Rowley et al., 1998; Smalls et al., 2007; Sullivan & Arbuthnot, 2007). So, too, has the Image of God construct (Cheston et al., 2003; Cook, 2004; Dickie et al., 2006; Manock, 2004; Muller, 2004; Piedmont et al., 1997; Roberts, 1989). Thus, needed in the literature is an examination of the Image of God construct and how Racial Identity and Image of God may be related when assessed in participants of Black Churches.

Image of God

Researchers have found that the Image of God that an individual holds is the function of a number of interacting, personal variables, including self-esteem, family socialization, parental representations, and social organizations (Cheston et al., 2003; Cook, 2003; Moriarty & Hoffman, 2007; Piedmont et al., 1997). As opposed to one's

God concept, which Moriarty and Hoffman (2007) defined as what people think about God, one's Image of God is the subjective and emotive experience of this God (Moriarty & Hoffman, 2007). In her doctoral examination of father-absence on the subjective well-being and Image of God of African American adolescent girls, Cook (2003) argued that one's Image of God "refers to the cognitive and affective dimensions of a person's concept of God" (p. 6). Interestingly, this same definition could be applied to one's Racial Identity, as it sums the cognitive and affective dimensions of a person's concept of his or her race.

Also like Racial Identity, one's Image of God is a powerfully revealing, yet empirically enigmatic construct (Gibson, 2007). Researchers have found evidence that one's Image of God is influenced by abuse status (Kane, Cheston, & Greer, 1993; Muller, 2004; Murray-Swank & Pargament, 2005), end of life salience (Matt, 1987), threat, loss, and stressful situations (Maynard, Gorsuch, & Bjorck, 2001), mental health (Bradshaw, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2008; Schaap-Jonker, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Verhagen, & Zock, 2002), and self-esteem (Kunkel, Cook, Meshel, Daughtry & Hauenstein, 1999). Yet, as with measurements of Racial Identity, results from assessments used to measure Image of God have been inconsistent (Gibson, 2007), with researchers using methods as subjective as interpreting a drawing (Mueller, 2004) to as objective as measuring God with a five-factor personality perspective (Piedmont et. al., 1997). In his review of the current assessments that measure Image of God, Gisbon (2007) acknowledged that people process and experience God in complicated ways that have not been captured effectively by measurement approaches. Hence, researchers have attempted to make quantifiable

what has been debated by scholars and theologians largely as a qualitative relationship (Adler, 1958.; Allport, 1953; Freud, 1955) for quite some time.

Image of God Construct

The Image of God construct was born out of the psychoanalytic and object relations field, pioneered through the writings of Freud (Coles,1990; Manock, 2004; Rizutto, 1979). In her psychoanalytic examination of the God-image among psychiatric in-patients, Rizutto (1979) summarized that it was Freud's "genius to discover that, wittingly or not, we create our own gods from the apparently simple warp and woof of our everyday life" (p. 5). From his cultural examination of man and his religion, Freud (1953) projected that God is "nothing other than an exalted father" (p. 147). Researchers have noted Freud's preoccupation with men (Coles, 1990; Rizutto, 1979), and amended his language to include both the mother and the father in the God representation (Birky & Ball, 1988; Coles, 1990; Rizutto, 1979; Vergote, 1981). Rizzuto (1979) went on to claim:

> It is true that God is not the creation of the child alone. God is found in the family. Most of the time He is offered by the parents to the chilhd; He is found in everyday conversation, art, architecture, and social events. e is presented as invisible but nonetheless real. (p. 8)

From Freud's work, we see the deconstruction of the omnipotent representation of God (Coles, 1990). For example, the book of Genesis presented man as the creation of a paternal God who made man in his image. Freud, however, rebutted that man created God in man's image (Rizutto, 1979). Whereas Adler (1931), a contemporary of Freud, claimed that it was man's desire to be like God, Freud demoted the deity; God functioned as psychological representations and projections of individuals who, advertently or not,

viewed God as they viewed their parents and themselves (Allport, 1953; Lambert & Kurpius, 2004; Rizutto, 1979). In this way, one's Image of God is shrouded in what Kauffman (1993) called a "decidedly anthropomorphic cast" (p. 310). In Christian doctrine, for example, one finds traces of the humanization of God in the bible. There, God is described as being jealous, wrathful, vengeful, loving, patient, and concerned—language that can be used to describe a parent or a lover. Additional passages in the bible describe God as someone who is responsive to human needs, even creating woman after discerning that it was not good for man to be alone. For individuals who have experienced a life largely devoid of major tragedies, God often assumes qualities of love, nurturance, and care (Basset & Williams, 2003).

When God is unresponsive to human needs, however, the humanity of the God-image has been challenged and, in some cases, eradicated. After prolonged malevolent and atrocious Nazi acts, for example, Victor Frankl (2006) disclosed how he and other prisoners in concentration camps lost faith in God. This prompted Frankl to restructure his understanding of a higher power and meaning making. Similarly, for individuals who have been socially denigrated or have experienced trauma, the God-image takes on complicated qualities that are spiritually and psychologically revealing (Hoffman, et al., 2007; Kaur-Mann, 2003; Muller, 2004). Assuming a phenomenological approach and particularly relevant to this study, Kwon (2005) wrote that how someone views God is not as important as why someone views God. For example, in his examination of the religious beliefs of Trans-Atlantic Africans who would later become slaves in America, Lincoln (2003) argued that the Black condition, specifically, "demanded a God with feeling; a God the distressed could talk to!" (p. 175). Rebutting current findings in the

literature, Hoffman et al. (2007) wrote that "while White males are able to base religious experience and a God image off of similarities to God, women, LGBT individuals, and people of color are placed in a position of relating to God based upon dissimilarity" (p. 257). With a majority of studies in the Image of God literature coming from White American samples (e.g., Dickie et al., 2006; Lambert & Kurpius, 2004; Piedmont, Williams, & Ciarrocchi, 1997), needed is an examination of this God-image from a majority African American sample and the specific variables said to influence this Image.

Gender and Income Influences

Among majority White samples, two variables said to influence Image of God are gender and income (Foster & Keating, 1992; Roberts, 1989). In Christian theology, for example, God is explained as a man. Scholars have examined the biblical, cultural, and evolutionary influence of the male as the tribe leader (Coles, 1990; Freud, 1953) and the resulting projection of this role in the culture's Image of God. In a series of studies testing the personal and cultural construction of the gendered God, Foster and Keating (1992) asserted that the Western concept of God is that of a male. On an individual level, Goodwin (2001) theorized that the act of making a child is the instance when the infant is introduced to the paternal Image of God. Intrapsychically, Goodwin asserted that the father flows through the embryo at the point of conception and diffuses into the growing fetus. In this way, Goodwin explained that God can hold both masculine and feminine attributes, and can take on new meanings as relationships grow and change.

To test for a masculine versus a feminine Image of God, Foster and Keating (1992) amassed 56 University of Washington students (33 females, 23 males) in a lower-

level psychology class. These participants were asked to write a paragraph to describe God. The authors reported that 64% of respondents referred to God in the masculine form and none of the participants referred to God in a feminine form. In addition, 11% of the participants used inclusive language to describe God (i.e., God as he/she). In the study, 21% of participants used pronouns, but made no reference to the sex or gender of God, and 4% of respondents referred to God as It. The authors repeated this procedure with 57 participants from another lower-level psychology class at the University of Washington (38 females, 19 males). In this sample, 79% of respondents in this sample referred to God as a male, while no one in the sample referred to God as a female. The authors reported that 4% of participants used inclusive language to describe God. In addition, 12 % used no pronouns to describe God, and 4% of respondents referred to God as It. In another study, the authors tested for a cultural God-concept by asking 41 participants from an Introductory Psychology class their impression of how they thought most people would describe God. In this study, 97% of participants circled male and 3% circled female. From these studies, Foster and Keating (1992) found support for their claim that there seemed to be more of a masculine portrayal of God by individuals. In each of these studies, White Americans were the majority of those sampled.

More specifically, Lambert and Kurpius (2004) found evidence to suggest that how one perceives gender roles and one's views about nontraditional roles of women predicted a gendered Image of God. The authors sampled from individuals who identified as Catholic from three Southwestern universities. From their sample of 282 participants, the authors reported that 246 of the participants were students and 36 were not students. Further, 119 identified as male, 153 identified as female, with the average age in the

sample being 24.15 years of age. In this sample, 141 participants identified as White American, 64 participants identified as Latin-American, 27 identified as Asian American, 19 were Filipino, 8 were international, 3 were Middle Eastern, 3 were Eastern Indian, and 2 were Native American and Pacific Islander, respectively. Participants completed the Bem (1981) Sex Role Inventory, a 30-item measure with 10 masculine descriptions (e.g., independent and assertive), 10 feminine descriptors (e.g., affectionate and understanding), and 10 gender neutral descriptors (e.g., conscientious and moody). Participants also completed a 22-item scale that measured attitudes about women and their behaviors, and a 79-item measure that assessed masculine and feminine descriptors of God. For men in the study, the authors reported that feminine role identity ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$), or individuals who believed in traditional feminine roles, and attitudes toward women ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .001$), or individuals who had less favorable views about women, accounted for a significant portion of the variability in an Image of God with feminine characteristics. These men were less likely to view God as having feminine characteristics. Among women, only feminine gender role identity accounted for a large amount of the variability in an Image of God with feminine characteristics ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$). The authors asserted that while Catholicism has emphasized God as male, many Catholic churches have highlighted the feminine aspects of God, perhaps explaining the results from their findings. Further, these results suggest that social institutions can influence Image of God.

Dickie, Eshleman, Merasco, Shepard, Wilt, and Johnson (1997) examined participants from within a social institution (a Protestant Church) to assess gender influences on the God image. Additionally, the authors conducted another study to

examine gender influences on the God image of lower-income individuals. In their first study, the authors examined gender differences between boys and girls in terms of perception of attachment to their father and their mother. The sample consisted of 22 Caucasian girls and 27 Caucasian boys (ages 4-5, *n* = 17; ages 7-8, *n* = 18; ages 9-10, *n* = 14) who were recruited from Sunday school classes at a middle to upper middle class Protestant church. The interviews lasted 30 minutes. Children were released from the Sunday school class to complete the interviews and returned to class when the interviews were over. The children were shown pictures of adjectives of seven male actors and seven female actors. Children rated whether the adjective was "a lot alike,""a little alike," or "not like" the child's mother, father, and God. Children's responses were recorded. The authors found that girls perceived God to be more like both parents than did boys.

Based on the results of this study, Dickie et al. (1997) sought to examine whether parenting styles would account for differences in children's Image of God. The authors revealed that they looked at discipline orientations and home demographics of a more diverse group of people. This sample consisted of 47 boys and 47 girls, 44% of whom were White, 41% were Hispanic, and 10.6% were African American, Pacific Islander, American Indian, or of mixed race. The authors did not list any denomination variables with this sample, but did indicate that the children were from lower to middle class income families. Why the authors did not examine parenting styles from a sample of children that were similar to the first study is confounding. Indeed, there seems to be something problematic in the authors' rationale to examine the discipline orientation of children from lower to middle-income class families. In addition, unlike the first study, the children in this study completed two 25-minute interviews. In the first interview, the

children used the adjective cards to rate the card's likeness to God. In the second interview, the children used the adjective cards to rate the card's likeness to the mother and the father. Additionally, the researchers used cloth figures for the child to simulate what happens in the home when the child "did something wrong" (p. 33). The children were instructed to use the figures to explain what happened in their homes. From this sample, the authors found no gender effects in this study. Interestingly, the authors found that father's nurturance was inversely related to a nurturing God. Therefore, if father was not indicated as having a nurturing parental style, God was seen as more nurturing from the adjective cards.

This study has interesting implications in terms of God-image, parental representations, and income status, though the authors did not give explicit data on the average income in the homes of the children in the second part of the sample. Instead, the authors were explicit in outlining their attempt to sample from an economically diverse sample. Similarly, Roberts (1989) purposed to determine if there were income and gender differences in the God-image. Roberts' sample consisted of 185 participants from a Midwestern University town. In the study, 20% of the participants were Lutheran, 20% Methodists, 18% Catholics, 7% Presbyterian, 7% Baptist, 4% Congregationalist, 4% Evangelical Free Respondents, 3% Episcopalians, 3% non-Baptist fundamentalist, and 14% identified as other. Although Roberts (1989) reported a median income between 20 and 30 thousand dollars annually, he did not report any demographic information on the racial composition of his sample. Roberts revealed that he assessed for Image of God by asking "how often do you think of God as" and used descriptors: "critical, accepting, demanding, giving, punishing, forgiving, frustrated, successful, serious, or playful" (p.

377). Participants rated their God-Image on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*).

Additionally, Roberts amassed what he called semantic statements that incorporated the adjectives used in the God-image assessment. For example, "Someone who is always critical is likely to be suspicious of others motives" (p. 377). Respondents were asked "how often do the phrases describe who you really are" using the same Likert scale as with the God-Image assessment (p. 377). Based on these assessments and varimax rotation, Roberts reported that the variables loaded on two main factors: God as nurturing (27.2% of variance explained), and God as disciplining (21% of the variance explained). Roberts called these the male/female binary of God. Roberts also reported that women were more likely to perceive God as nurturing than men were in this sample. At the same time, Roberts found that women attended church more frequently than men did. In general, in this sample, individuals who attended church more often were more likely to have a nurturing Image of God. Roberts also reported that a disciplining God-image occurred more frequently with people with lower SES as opposed to more affluent individuals. According to Roberts, "the poor accept their lot solely because they believe themselves powerless to do otherwise" (p. 382). Although this explanation appears to be overly simplified, especially given the limited number of descriptors of the God-image, Roberts' study highlighted the importance of demographic factors, such as gender and income, and how they shape an individual's Image of God.

Given more descriptors of the God-image, the feminine aspect of the God-image (i.e., loving, nurturing, kind) is one that has resonated with participants. In their study of French Canadian students who identified as Roman Catholic, Tamayo and Dugas (1981)

found overwhelming support for the argument that, based on characteristics and not appearance of God, one's Image of God is more feminine. The researchers also found gender correlates in how one perceives this image. The authors sampled 351 French Canadian students (average age 21) from liberal arts (152 total, 69 males, 83 females), science (127 total, 87 males, 40 females) and graduate populations (72 total, 52 males, 20 females). Tamayo and Dugas used a 36-item measure in which half of the items were maternal characteristics and half were paternal characteristics. Examples of maternal characteristics were "the one who is the most patient," "tenderness," and "sensitive" (p. 26). Examples of paternal characteristics were "strength," "power," and "who gives the directions" (p. 27). Participants were asked to rate each parental figure and then the representation of God based on the characteristics. The authors found that the mother-God distance score on this measure was smaller than the father-God distance score was ($p < .001$); God had more characteristics of the mother than of the father. In addition, the mother-God and father-God distances were smaller for the graduate and liberal art students than for the science students ($p < .001$). Finally, the authors reported an interaction between the sex of the participants and semantic difference score, $F(2) = 4.015$, $p < .05$. The authors reported that the mother figure was the most adequate symbol for the representation of God across the entire population. In this study, we saw an Image of God that has more feminine than masculine attributes. Using the findings of Tamayo and Dugas (1981) and other studies presented in Vergote and Tamayo's (1981) work, Nelson, Cheek, and Au (1985) suggested that, based on the dissonance of religious imagery in religious texts, males might be less able than females to differentiate between masculine items and more feminine items in the God-image.

Parental Representations

Along with gender and income, parents have been said to influence the Image of God of their children based on attachment styles. Bowlby (1979, 1988) explained that infants form personality characteristics based on the emotional and physical (in)availability of the mother or primary caregiver. Further, infants form attachment behaviors, defined as the attempt to attain or maintain proximity to an individual perceived as more powerful and capable of surviving in the world (Bowlby, 1988). Because “very young children are even more alive to the significance of tones of voice, gesture, and facial expression than are adults, and from the first infants are keenly sensitive to the way they are handled” (Bowlby, 1979, p. 16), the significance of these early interactions are profound. Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) explained that Bowlby's model emphasized that the "need for available and responsive caregiver remains with us throughout the lifespan " (p. 319). For this reason, attachment figures serve as a haven of safety that the infant can assess in times of distress or threat and a secure base in the absence of danger. When startled or in distress, the infant engages in behaviors like crying or clinging to increase proximity and safety.

In their examination of the strange situation, an experiment in which interactions were observed between an infant, the infant’s mother, and, at times, a stranger, Ainsworth et al. (1978) defined three types of attachment behaviors: (1) Avoidance responses or “conspicuous avoidance of proximity to or interaction with the mother in the reunion episodes” (p. 59); (2) Secure responses, or “the baby wants either proximity and contact with his mother or interaction with her, and he actively seeks it” (p. 60); and (3) Ambivalent responses, or “the baby displays conspicuous contact-and interaction-

resisting behavior" (p. 62). In their examination of infant-mother attachment styles at 12 and 18 months, Vaughn, Egeland, Sroufe, and Waters (1979) found evidence that stressful events can alter mother-child attachment, such that babies who were once classified as secure could be classified as anxious.

Researchers have underscored the importance of parental attachment styles with the psychological security of infants. In fact, researchers have found that attachment patterns that the mother formed when she was a child influenced her ability to attach with her own child (Grossman & Grossman, 1991). Grossman and Grossman (1991) contended, "the striking stability of these early formed attachment patterns shows that the emotional experience during the first year cannot be easily compensated by later cognitive skills such as reasoning or perspective taking" (p. 107). Further, researchers have linked attachment styles and parental representations (Levy, Blatt, & Shaver, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992), especially as it relates to parental representations in the God-image (Coles, 1990; Moriarty & Hoffman, 2007). Moriarty and Hoffman (2007) explained that the God-image is the complex and subjective emotional experience of God shaped by an individual's family history, which in turn causes their experience of God to resemble their relationship with their parents. As children are highly impressionable (Rizutto, 1979), parental representations strongly tend to influence the initial Image of God (Coles, 1990; Heller, 1986) as well as Images of God of adults in later life (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992).

Children Samples. Children are introduced to the concept of God through parental messages. In her psychoanalytic examination of clinical patients' Image of God, Rizutto (1979) noted the following:

> The child is often told that God will punish him, bless him, or love him. And the adult says it seriously, meaning it. The child cannot fail to notice that the adult believes. Through these adult gestures and hints, God, although unseen, is given an existence in reality that contrasts sharply with all the other creations of the child's fantasy. God, however, is not there to be seen and looked at. All the child senses is that he is powerful, respectable, rules everything, and is everywhere. From experience the child knows only two people who have all these characteristics: his mother and his father. Of necessity, his God representation utilizes the representation of the most significant parent available at the moment (p. 194)

Based on this reverence and deference, children amass a God-image that resembles parental representations. When children have been asked about the God-image, researchers have found parental representations to be largely present (Birky & Ball, 1988; Coles, 1990; Heller, 1986).

For example, Heller (1986) found parental representations in the God-image drawings of his child participants. Measuring differences in the God-image based on denomination and parental style, Heller examined 40 children (20 girls and 20 boys, 4-12 years old as of 1984) in two-hour interviews. Heller's sample consisted of Jewish, Catholic, and Baptist children. From his sample, Heller found different God-representations among the children. More specifically, Catholic children presented an Image of God that was involved in family life. Among Baptist children, Heller found themes of a nurturing God and an ordered God. Heller found that Jewish children "evidence an uncanny appreciation for history as a subject and…a timeless propinquity to their historical ancestors" (p. 19). Heller also reported gender differences in themes on Image of God, as girls' Image of God was more aesthetic and intimate, while boys'

Image of God was more active and distant. Heller suggested that children who imaged an angry God may have had overbearing and destructive parents.

Johnson and Eastburg (1992) suggested that that theological instruction and development, but not parenting variables, account for the God-image of children. Among a sample of 30 abused children (17 females, 13 males, 15 White, 8 Hispanic, 7 Black) aged 5-13 (mean age 9.17 years), and 30 non-abused children (15 males, 15 females, 17 Hispanics, 8 White, and 5 Asian) aged 5-12 (mean age 8.3 years), Johnson and Eastburg (1992) used a Story-Completion Projective Test of parents and God to test the God and parent concept of abused and non-abused children. The authors recorded the children's responses and coded them dichotomously as 1 (*portraying*) or 0 (*not portraying*) kindness, wrathfulness, and distance. The authors also used a 22-adjective measure on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*all the time*) to assess the child's feelings about themselves. The authors found abused children rated their parents as less kind than non-abused children did ($\chi^2 = 15.02$, $p < .005$). Additionally, abused children viewed their parents as more wrathful ($\chi^2 = 4.59$, $p < .05$). Interestingly, the authors reported that there were no differences between abuse-status and concept of God. Based on this finding, Johnson and Eastburg (1992) hypothesized that these children may deny that God is abusive in order to survive in their homes. In addition, the authors suggested: (1) the effects of parental abuse on the God-concept might appear later in the child's development and (2) children integrate theological instruction, but do not think critically about it. A critique against this study is that the authors did not match the samples in the abused and non-abused groups, such that group differences might have influenced findings. One also could argue that the dichotomously coded projective measure of the

Story Completion test was too simplistic in its assessment of parents' kindness, wrathfulness, and distance.

Parental Representations in Adult Samples. Scholars have argued that mothers significantly influence the God-image (Hertel & Donahue, 1995). Indeed, individuals have been more likely to resonate with traditional feminine characteristics in the God-image as opposed to traditional masculine characteristics (Lambert & Kurpius, 2004; Roberts, 1989; Tamayo & Dugas, 1981). In their sample of 102 Swedish participants, Granqvist, Ivarsson, Broberg, and Hagekull (2007) found evidence of the maternal representation in Image of God. The authors reported that Sweden is a country that is highly secular, with only 10% of the population identifying as active Christians. In this study, 40% of participants in the sample were men and the mean age in the sample was 28.77 years. The authors measured attachment through an adult attachment interview, a 20-question, semi-structured interview that asked participants about childhood relationships with parents, experiences as a child, and experiences with loss, fear, and anxiety, for example.

Hertel and Donahue (1995) reported that the interview took 45 to 90 minutes to complete. The authors coded data along three main dimensions: loving (i.e., parent a reliable and secure base for child), rejecting (i.e., parent frequently and harshly rejected child's attempt to gain attention), and role-reversal (i.e, when the parent uses the child for his/her own sense of security). The authors also assessed the degree to which participants adopted their parents' religious standards, the extent to which participants' religiosity had changed and at what age, and the extent to which participants prescribed to a new age orientation to spirituality (e.g., belief in astrology and openness to various spiritual

practices). The authors reported measuring Image of God through a semantic differential scale. Participants rated their Image of God as rejecting or accepting, loving or hating, damning or saving, unforgiving or forgiving, and approving or disapproving.

From their sample, Hertel and Donahue (1995) reported that parental loving scores were negatively associated with scores on the new age orientation to spirituality ($\beta = .25$, $p < .05$), suggesting that parental representations were less likely to play an influential role in individuals who have a new age spiritual orientation. The authors found that high maternal loving scores were related to high loving God-image scores ($r = .25$, $p < .05$). The authors also found that high maternal role reversal was negatively related to a loving Image of God ($r = -.34$, $p < .01$) and positively associated to a distant Image of God ($r = .27$, $p < .05$). Hence, mothers who were coded as using their child for their own purposes were not related to a loving Image of God. The God-image was not significantly associated with father attachment in this study.

Strunk (1959) also found that the God-image was associated with maternal representations. In his study of 20 participants of the Protestant faith (10 males and 10 females, 19-27 years of age), Strunk examined deity concepts and parental representations. Sampling from within a church-related College of Liberal Arts in a religion-based major, Stunk measured deity concepts with 60-statements that described feelings ranging from very positive to very negative of six pairs of factors: God-Jesus, Mother-Father, God-Father, God-Mother, Father-Jesus, and Mother-Jesus. Participants responded to the prompt, "When I think of God I…" or "When I think of Mother I…." (p. 223) for the 60-statements. Strunk reported that the correlation for the God-Mother pair ($r = .505$) was higher on average than God-Jesus pair ($r = .453$). Likewise, Strunk reported

that the God-Mother pair was correlated higher for the male group (r =.599, p < .01) than for the female group. Although the sample sizes for both the male and female group were small, Strunk found that deity concepts mirrored the mother.

In another study, Dickie, Ajega, Kobylak, and Nixon (2006) found influences of the mother in the God-image to be significant. The authors examined 132 (40 male and 92 female) students at a church-affiliated college in the Midwest, of whom 19 of the participants were Catholic, 65 were mainline Protestants, 30 were evangelical, nine were Christian, and seven were non-Christian. The authors reported little diversity in the sample, as 127 of the 132 students identified as White or non-Hispanic and 126 students identified themselves as being middle to high class. To measure self-esteem, the authors had participants complete the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Marsh & Richards, 1988; TSCS), a 100-item, 5-point Likert measure (1 = *completely false of me* to 5 = *completely true of me*) of self-descriptive statements. In order to measure Image of God, participants were shown illustrations of 14 adjectives with seven male actors and seven female actors. The authors exampled that the adjective warm showed an illustration of a "kindly expression cuddling an infant" (p. 60). Participants used a Likert scale to rate whether the picture was like or un-alike their mother, father, and God (1 = *not at all like* to 5 = *exactly like*). The authors found a main effect for gender on the God-image as punishing, $F(2, 126) = 12.75$, $p = .001$, such that men in the sample imagined God to be more disciplining than women did. The authors reported that mothers were more influential than fathers in terms of men's self-esteem ($p = .02$) and imaging God as nurturing ($p = .09$). For women participants, self-esteem was influenced by both mothers and fathers. Interestingly, in their sample of 100 undergraduate students at a private Liberal Arts

institution, Birky and Ball (1988) found evidence that both parents composite the God-image, $F(1, 75) = 20.02$, $p < .02$. Participants in this sample were predominantly White, and were 57% male and 43 % female.

Adult Attachment. In his dissertation that examined adult attachment styles and Image of God in individuals, Manock (2004) did not found significant evidence for correlations between Image of God and Adult Attachment style. Manock's study consisted of 569 participants (42.9% male, 57.1% female; 80.2% White American, 10.8% Asian American, 13% Latino, and 8% other). The mean age in the sample was 47. Additionally, 235 respondents identified as married, 5 respondents identified as separated, 97 respondents were single/never married, 36 respondents were divorced/single respondents, 3 respondents were divorced/remarried respondents, and 23 respondents were widowed respondents.

Arguably, Manock's (2003) results were influenced by his choice of measurements. He used a 36-item, four point Likert from *Strongly Agree* to *Disagree* that measured the God Image along three scales: belonging, goodness, and control. Manock also used a 10-item paired adjective instrument that measured dimensions of the God-Image. Sample items include "demanding-not demanding" and "freeing-restricting." The author reported that there were no further data on this scale in terms of its reliability and validity. Finally, Manock used a 30-item measure that assessed attachment along two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance. The use of a scale with no data on its psychometric properties is problematic. This problem could have contributed to Manock finding no support for his hypothesis that a secure adult attachment style would be related to a positive Image of God. The author also found no support for the hypothesis that

dismissive avoidant and fearful avoidant adult attachment style would be inversely related to a positive Image of God.

Contrary to Manock (2004), Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) found support for the claim that attachment styles correlate with Image of God. More specifically, these authors measured the effects of paternal attachment on the God-image and religious conversion experience of 213 participants (180 women, 33 men). The authors assessed the degree to which religious beliefs or faith became more or less important in adolescence through adulthood (roughly 13-22 years of age) on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from *much less important* to *much more important.* Based on the responses on this question, the authors gauged the reason for the change in religious beliefs or faith by giving participants three possible reasons for the change: an intense and sudden personal change, a slow or gradual change with one or more somewhat intense experiences or changes, or a slow or gradual change over a long period of time. The authors assessed Image of God through seven bipolar adjective ratings of God: accepting-rejecting, restricting-feeling, distant-close, impersonal-personal, available-not available, not comforting-comforting, and responsive-not responsive. The authors measured attachment styles by having participants read three paragraphs that exampled a secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent father and mother. Participants were asked to indicate the best paragraph that described the father and mother in the pre-adolescent years.

Of the three attachment types assessed in this study, Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) found a positive relationship between a secure maternal attachment type and loving God (r =.25, p < .01). In terms of religious conversion experience, the authors reported that 28% of adolescent participants who had reported having an avoidant mother

also reported a sudden religious conversion experience. The authors noted that this was a sharp contrast to the 1% of the secure group and 4% of the anxious/ambivalent group that reported sudden religious conversions. The authors also found that 44% of the participants who reported avoidant maternal attachment had a sudden religious conversion experience in either adolescence and adulthood. In times of crisis, the authors suggested, maternal attachment was a predictor in the conversion experience. From these findings, the authors suggested that maternal attachment was influential in participants' imagining God as loving. Likewise, maternal attachment was a powerful indicator of religious conversion experience among adolescents and those who indicated having an avoidant maternal attachment. For avoidant attachment types, religious conversion experiences were apt to occur at any point in the 13-22 age range. Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) suggested that parents can influence conversion experiences when younger. However, relationships can cause conversion experiences as individuals become older. The authors suggested that, based on these findings, God may serve as the ideal attachment and compensation figure. The authors posited that the "perceived relationship with God serves as a haven in times of distress or threat" (p. 310).

Rizutto (1979) also found evidence of a compensatory Image of God as an ideal parent in her examination of the God-image among 20 psychiatric in-patients (10 men and 10 women, aged 18-60 years old). To measure for Image of God, Rizutto asked parallel questions about participants' perception of God and participants' perception of their parents. In addition, Rizutto was privy to a comprehensive life history of patients, which included medical history and interviews with family members. Rizutto reported an average of 18 hours of evaluation for each participant. Based on these interviews, Rizutto

reported relationships between participants' perceptions of the primary caregiver and Image of God. The participants who had experienced trauma, for example, imaged their God as being traumatizing, for example. More interestingly, there were also relationships between Image of God as a compensation figure in participants who revealed an opposing Image of God (i.e., God as nurturing) from a caregiver that the participant felt the most tension with growing up (i.e., a neglectful mother). In terms of other variables that influenced the God-image of participants in her sample, Rizutto found that Image of God was also influenced by childhood health, deaths, and other events. In short, for both children and adults, the parental representations on Image of God is substantial.

Personality Correlates and Image of God

Personality correlates, including self-esteem, also have been found to be influential in the God-image. In their examination of prayer, God-imagery, and symptoms of psychopathology, Bradshaw et al. (2008) hypothesized that frequency of prayer would be inversely related to symptoms of psychopathology. In addition, the authors hypothesized that persons who held more positive Images of God, that is God is seen as loving, caring, and forgiving, would experience fewer symptoms of psychopathology. The authors used ordinary least squares regression (OLS) to analyze data obtained from a questionnaire that measured religious, spiritual, and mental health variables of 1629 participants (816 males, 813 females; 1472 White Americans, 76 African Americans, 16 Latin-Americans, 33 Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, and 32 participants from other ethnicities). The authors reported that the average age in the sample was 49.1 years, with the religious affiliation consisting of 863 Protestants, 351 Catholics, 75 Jewish, 14 Orthodox Christians, 9 Muslim, and 19 participants prescribing to an Eastern Religion.

The authors assessed for symptoms of psychopathology using a measure that asked participants how much they had been bothered or distressed by anxiety, depression, hostility, interpersonal sensitivity, obsession-compulsion, paranoid ideation, phobia anxiety, and somatization within the past month. Responses ranged from 0 = *not at all* to 4 = *quite a bit.* Participants were asked how frequently they prayed, from 0 = *never* to 7 = *everyday*. Finally, the God-image was assessed asking participants how strongly they agreed on a four-point scale (0 = *not at all* to 3 = *describes completely*) with the following characteristics of God: loving, forgiving, approving, and remote.

The authors found that loving God imagery was inversely associated with depression (r = -.49, p < .05), anxiety (r = -.47, p < .05), interpersonal sensitivity(r = -.53, p < .05), phobic anxiety(r = -.69, p < .05), obsessive-compulsive behaviors (r = -.40, p < .05), somatization (r = -.50, p < .05), paranoid ideation (r = -.42, p < .05), and hostility (r = -.41, p < .05). The authors also found interactions between prayer and a loving Image of God. That is, prayer was associated with poor mental health for individuals who did not view God as loving (r = -.012, p < .05). Similarly, the authors found interactions between prayer and a remote Image of God such that individuals who pray and perceive God as not being remote may experience better mental health (r = .026, p < .05). The authors did not report group differences with Image of God in terms of frequency of prayer and symptomatology. These findings are in line with Piedmont et al. (1997), who suggested that Image of God is a function of personality correlates and self sources.

From a sample of mental health patients in the Netherlands, Schaap-Jonker et al. (2002) found evidence of varying views of the God-image based upon symptomatology

and personality type. The authors used a questionnaire to assess personality features (the Vragenlijst Kenmerken Persoonlijkeird – VKP-IV; Duijsens, Eurelings-Bontekoe, & Diekstra, 1996). The questionnaire was composed of 182 questions on a 3-point scale (true = *2*, false = *0*, and ? = *1*). The authors also used a measure that assessed feelings about God (positive vs. negative) and experience of God's actions (supportive, dominating, punishing, passive). The God-image assessment was a 49-item measure on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*). Finally, the authors assessed for symptomatology using a 90-item instrument validated on the Dutch population. Overall, the authors found that symptomatology was negatively associated with a negative Image of God (r =.40, p < .01). More specifically, the more depressed (r =.44, p < .01), agoraphobic (r =.40, p < .01), hostile (r =.32, p < .05), and anxious (r =.30, p < .05) an individual self-reported, the more likely he or she reported negative feelings toward God.

The DSM-IV (2000) lists personality clusters along three dimensions: A, B, and C. Personality disorders in Cluster A are labeled odd or eccentric disorders and include paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal personality disorders. Personality disorders in Cluster B are labeled dramatic, emotional, or erratic disorders, and include antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personality disorders. Personality disorders in Cluster C are labeled anxious or fearful disorders, and include avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive personality disorders. In this study, Schaep-Jonker et al. (2002) found that individuals in Cluster A were more likely to experience God negatively (r =.48, p < .001) and were less likely to find God supportive (r =.5, p < .001). The authors also found a partial correlation between Cluster A personality disorders and experiencing God's actions as passive (r =.45, p < .001). In terms of Cluster C, the authors found

correlations between this cluster and individuals experiencing God as dominant and/or punishing (r = .34, p < .05). The authors warned that self-report has its limitations. Also, the sample summarized data collected from individuals in the Netherlands, where cultural and health care practices differ from those in the United States. At the same time, these findings imply that one's personality and mental health influence how one perceives God.

Self-Esteem and Image of God. Buri and Mueller (1993) suggested that self-esteem and self-concept accounted for the God-image more than parental representations, though their results indicated that both parental representations and self-esteem account for the God-image. The authors arrived at this conclusion by examining 213 Catholic college students (129 women, 84 men) from the University of St. Thomas in an introductory psychology course. Student participants were those who indicated that God was very important in their lives. The authors used eight bipolar adjectives to assess the God-image: condemning-loving, cruel-kind, wrathful-patient, stern-gracious, punishing-forgiving, critical-merciful, tough-gentle, and avenging-comforting. The authors assessed parental nurturance with a 24-itemed parental nurturance scale. Finally, the authors measured self-esteem through the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (Marsh & Richards, 1988; TSCS). The authors found that self-esteem was significantly related to participants' conceptions of God (r =.44, p <.0001). In addition, the authors found that mother's nurturance was related to participants' concept of God (r =.16, p < .05) as was father's nurturance (r =.17, p < .05). In this study, self-esteem and parent's nurturance were influential in the God image.

Expanding on the influence of self-esteem, Benson and Spilka (1973) researched a homogenous sample of 128 males. The authors only sampled males who had been

Catholic for 10 years and had been raised in a Catholic home. The mean age for participants in the sample was 15.4. To measure self-esteem, the authors used 22-items from Coopersmith's (1967) self-esteem scale. The scale measures self-attitudes in four areas: peers, parents, schools, and personal interest. To measure Image of God, the authors created a 13-item semantic differential scale. In this measurement, 5-paired items amassed a Loving God scale: rejecting-accepting, loving-hating, damning-saving, unforgiving-forgiving, and approving-disapproving. Five-paired items also amassed the Controlling God scale: demanding-not demanding, freeing-restricting, controlling-uncontrolling, strict-lenient, and permissive-rigid. Each item was scored from zero to six. The authors used 64 adjectives to assess the God-image along 6 factors: The Vindictive God (God is wrathful, avenging, damning), The Stern Father (God as unyielding, punishing, and restricting), The Allness factor (God is infinite, absolute, has all-changing power, and wisdom), The Distant Factor (God is inaccessible), Supreme Ruler (God is majestic and sovereign), and Kindly Father (God is merciful, forgiving, and patient).

Benson and Spilka (1973) wrote that the Vindictive God-image was comprised from Old Testament descriptors of God, while the Kindly Father God-image was comprised from New Testament descriptors of God. Benson and Spilka (1973) found that individuals with a high self-esteem experienced God as loving (r =.51, p < .01) and a kindly father (r =.31, p < .05), while individuals with low self-esteem experienced God as vindictive (r =-.49. p < .01), controlling (r =-.35, p < .01), and a stern father (r =-.21, p < .01). Building on Benson and Spilka's (1973) assertion, the researcher posits that, in Christian theology, it was when God interacted with woman (i.e., the immaculate conception) that the Bible transitioned from the Old to the New Testament. Similarly, the

God-image from the Old to the New Testament takes on more feminine characteristics in this transition. Hence, while the actual *image* of God tends to be that one a man, when one begins to delineate the *characteristics* of God, God tends to resemble a woman.

Seeking to investigate personality correlates between participants' self-esteem and their Image of Jesus, Piedmont et al. (1997) used the Adjective Checklist (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983), the Five-factor inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1985), and demographic questions to assess these variables. The ACL is a 300-item measure that allows participants to choose items that they view as the most descriptive. The descriptors in the ACL have been linked to the personality dimensions of the five-factor model: (1) neuroticism, or a tendency to experience negative affect like anxiety, depression, and hostility; (2) extraversion, or the quantity and intensity of interpersonal interactions; (3) openness to experience, or proactive seeking and appreciation of new experiences, (4) agreeableness, or the quality of interpersonal interactions; and (5) conscientiousness, or persistence, organization, and motivation. The NEO-FFI is a 60-item, 5-point Likert (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) that measures an individual's neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Piedmont et al.'s sample consisted of 77 women and 38 men (mean age 33.8 years), of whom 68% were Catholic, 25% Protestant, and 7% had no religious affiliation.

Piedmont et al. (1997) found that level of education was significantly and inversely related to perceptions of Jesus as neurotic (r =-.27, p <.01). The authors explained that the more educated a participant was, the more likely he or she was to view Jesus as emotionally stable. The authors also reported that level of education was significantly related to perceptions of Jesus as conscientious (r =.26, p < .01). More

educated participants saw Jesus as being dutiable and dependable. The authors reported a moderate sized association with ratings of Jesus and self-perceptions. Eleven percent of the variability in perceptions of Jesus was associated with individuals' self-perceptions. More specifically, individuals' extraversion, $F(5, 108) = 2.67$, $p < .05$ and openness, $F(5, 107) = 2.43$, $p < .05$ accounted for the overlap between self-perception and Image of Jesus. Hence, individuals who saw themselves as enjoying interpersonal interactions and as enjoying seeking out new experiences appeared to image Jesus to have these same qualities. Perhaps supporting Buri and Mueller's (1993) claim that self-esteem influences the God-image more than parental representations, this study illustrated that individuals do project aspects of themselves onto the God-image.

Attempting to measure individuals' self-projection onto the God-Image, specifically, how people conceptualize God and Satan, and how these concepts relate to self-perception, Bassett and Williams (2003) examined 90 participants from a large Urban University. In the study, there were 51 women and 39 men with an average age of 21.3 years. Student participants all identified as Protestant and indicated belief in both God and Satan. The authors randomly selected 100 items from the 300-itemed Adjective Checklist (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983) to assess the God image, 100 items to assess images of Satan, and 100 items for participants to assess themselves. Participants also completed demographic questions. Overall, the authors reported significant differences in participants' description of themselves, God, and Satan, $F(22, 66) = 54.4$. $p < .01$.The authors reported significant differences on the items of the ACL, with descriptions of God, Satan, and the self, with individuals rating God higher than the self and Satan lower than the self. In addition, individuals who frequently attended church had a more

favorable self-perception. The authors concluded that people with a higher self-perception also had a more favorable Image of God. Moreover, the authors reported that, while God was seen as gender neutral, favorable and strong, Satan was seen as masculine, unfavorable, strong, active, and high on the critical parent subscale of the ACL. However, because items were randomly selected from the ACL and may have been be disproportionately represented in the randomly selected scale, results gleaned from some subscales of the ACL (e.g., the critical parent scale) should be taken with caution.

Research Gaps in Image of God Literature

Few researchers have sought to examine the influence of the counseling process on changes in Image of God. For this reason, Cheston et al. (2003) sought to examine whether clients' image of God would change over the course of outpatient therapy. Additionally, the authors wanted to determine if decreases in emotional symptoms were related to more positive views about God. From a sample of 98 participants (22 men and 66 women), the researchers conducted an experiment in which a treatment group (30 participants) received therapy that focused on spiritual and religious issues. A control group (68 participants) received counseling that did not include spiritual or religious issues in session. The mean age for the treatment group was 39.1 years; the mean for the control group was 50.3 years. Clinicians were recruited to be a part of the study based on their experience with spiritual and religious issues in therapy. Participants in both groups were new clients in therapy.

The authors employed a 2x2 MANOVA to measure the effectiveness of therapy and the change in Image of God. To assess participants' Image of God, the authors used

the Adjective Checklist (ACL). In this study, the authors asked, "Who is God…Based on your understandings and/or experiences, what kinds of personal images do you hold of this being? Read through the list and check all those adjectives you feel would describe your image of God" (p. 99). The authors also used a 53-item self-report measure that assessed psychological symptoms. To measure therapists' assessment of client's psychiatric symptoms, the authors used an 18-item psychiatric rating scale. Finally, to measure emotional and spiritual growth at the end of therapy, clinicians completed a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from 0 = *no growth* to 7 = *significant growth.* Assessments were collected twice during the study, once at four weeks into counseling and later at 6 months into counseling or at termination. The authors reported a mean of 20 sessions and 6.7 months of therapy for both groups.

In terms of symptomatology, Cheston et al. (2003) reported that scores from the treatment group decreased from pretest to posttest, while scores for the control group remained the same ($p < .01$). The authors found that the treatment group initially experienced more psychological distress than did the control group, but these symptoms declined over the course of therapy. The authors reported that participants' Image of God changed at Time 2 for both groups, $F(5, 91) = 3.66$, $p < .005$. Univariate analysis revealed that participants rated God as less neurotic, $F(1, 95) = 7.74$, $p < .007$, more agreeable, $F(1, 95) = 7.42$, $p < .008$, and more conscientious, $F(1, 96) = 7.94$, $p < .01$ at Time 2.

Cheston et al.'s (2003) sample was heavily comprised of women. Further, the authors did not provide additional demographic information about the group, including data on baseline scores on the symptomatology assessments. The authors also chose to

have clinicians assess how well clients benefited from treatment as opposed to the client's completing a self-report measure. As with the critique of Helms and Richardson (1994) study, there are inherent limitations to having someone other than the individual assess the variables in question. Nevertheless, the findings from this study suggested that a client's Image of God could change throughout the course of therapy, especially if the clinician focuses on spiritual and religious issues in the course of therapy. Because spirituality and religion are said to be salient variables for African Americans, the findings from this study provide useful information.

In order to bring depth to Image of God literature, Kunkel, Cook, Meshel, Daughtry and Hauenstein (1999) used concept mapping, a qualitative methodology, to examine the God image of 20 undergraduates (10 men and 10 women). The authors explained that concept mapping "seeks for conceptual rather than statistical significance, and for meaning, rather than for necessary generalizability" (p. 196). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 57, with the authors reporting the median age as 20. Conducting the study in two parts, the authors asked participants to provide one to three word responses to the question *What is God like?* in the first part of the study. Researchers transcribed participant responses and a weekly research team compiled a list of 85 items that described participants' God image. In the second part of the study, participants were asked to sort through the 85 items, written on cards, and place the cards in piles based on how they seemed to group together. Participants were given the instruction that all cards had to be in a pile (no single piles) and that the cards had to be in more than one pile (to control against having all the cards in one pile). In this part of the study, participants also were given the 85 items in a questionnaire form and told to rate how well the certain item

descried God for the participant. The Likert scale ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 4 = *extremely well.*

Kunkel et al. (1999) reported using a nonmetric multidimensional scaling procedure (MDS) to measure the similarity matrix of participants' responses. The authors reported that the God-image map could be organized along two dimensions: horizontally (nurturant vs. punitive) and vertically (mystical vs. anthropomorphic). Along the dimensions, the authors listed seven clusters: human roles (e.g., man, woman, friend), regulating (e.g., teacher, ruler, judge, lawmaker), powerful (e.g., life-giving, strong), benevolent (e.g., caring, compassionate, kind), inspirational (e.g., energizing, exciting, amazing), mysterious (e.g., silent, restless), and vengeful (e.g., relentless, intimidating, unfair). Although a number of points can be critiqued with this study, namely that no descriptive data was given about the population and we were given the median age as opposed to the average age of the sample, this examination provided an alternate method to measure the God-image.

Speaking to another gap in the literature, Hoffman et al. (2008) deliberately sought a diverse sample population, as the authors reported that there had been no studies examining the God Image with ethnic, racial, and cultural differences. In their study of diversity and the God-image, the authors examined 211 college students in Southwestern California (125 White Americans, 24 African Americans, 19 Asian Americans, 1 Jewish American, 36 Latino Americans, 11 Pacific Islanders, and 1 Middle Eastern American). To assess diversity, the authors coded individuals who identified solely as White with a 2. Participants who identified as multiracial, with White being one of their ethnic identities were coded with a 1, and individuals who selected non-White were coded with a 0.

Groups 1 and 2 were comprised of 148 participants, while Group 0 was comprised of 63 participants. To explain the coded scale, the authors reasoned that the participants in the sample represented a broad range of identities that might not have been properly assessed with a Racial Identity measure. The researcher notes that it is odd that Hoffman et al. (2008) sought to examine Image of God from a diverse sample, but chose to include multiracial and solely White in the same comparative category.

To assess for Image of God, the authors used a scale that assessed God-images in three areas: belonging, goodness, and control. Associated with each area are two factors, what the authors revealed as a primitive (focused on the self) and the other focusing on the object of the relationship. Thus, for belonging, the authors listed two factors: presence (i.e., Is God there for me?) and challenge (i.e., Does God want me to grow?). For Goodness, the authors listed acceptance (i.e., Am I good enough for God to love?) and benevolence (i.e., Is God the sort of person who would want to love me). Finally, for Control, the authors listed influence (i.e., How much can I control God?) and providence (how much can God control me?).

In order to support the structure of the data, the authors revealed that three factors emerged in factor analysis. The authors labeled the first factor as egocentric or factors that focus on the self in the God image. The second factor was labeled growth, or a belief that God challenges people to grow and provides for this growth. The final factor was labeled benevolence, or the belief that God wants the best for the participants. From these measures, the authors found that participants who identified as multiracial or partially White were less likely to report an image of God that was benevolent and egocentric. Based on their racial identification, these participants did not image God as particularly

kind, nor was the self a focus in their God-image. The results were opposite for participants who identified themselves as completely non-White. These individuals viewed God as being benevolent and egocentric. The authors suggested that students of color might draw from internal resources to combat new or increased racial insensitivity, which would explain their God image as kind and shares their qualities (i.e., the egocentric factor).

African Americans and Image of God

For African Americans, the God-image has been a complicated construct (Hartnell, 2008; Jones, 1998; Mays, 1969; Ohm, 2003; Walker, 2008; Williams, 1993). As suggested by Hoffman et al. (2007), African Americans might have related to God through their history of oppression and denigration, through a relationship built more on *dis*similarity as opposed to similarity. For this reason, the Christian God often has occupied contradictory spaces within African American religious thought. God has been seen as both the liberator (Cone, 1970; Raboteau, 1994) and the oppressor (Jones, 1998). Williams (1993) argued that the Image of God African Americans hold is one of an exiled servant expected to uphold the servile responsibilities, yet expectorated from the promises of God. In her examination of African American women and their role in Christianity, Williams likened the African American experience, more specifically, the African American woman's experience, to the biblical story of Hagar, a slave who was impregnated by Abraham. In the bible, Abraham was promised to be the father of many nations. However, at the time of this prophecy, both Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were old and Sarah was thought to be barren. To fulfill God's prophecy, Sarah suggested that Abraham and Hagar procreate. Rather than live through God's promise, however, Hagar

and her son, Ishmael, were banished; Sarah was able to conceive the celestially-sanctioned heirs of Abraham. Williams argued that such was the experience of African American women who, during slavery, were forced into sexual relationships and, though denigrated, raised both slave baby and plantation baby. It was through a determination to survive and through hope, Williams argued, that African Americans, particularly African American women, related to and imagined God, and not necessarily through God's promises (Kaur-Mann, 2003).

This idea of hope just beyond the grasp was captured in Jones' (1998) explanation of theodicy, or a defense against God's love and goodness in the face of man's inhumanity to man. Jones appealed, "By arguing that human suffering should be endured and accepted because God Himself suffered even more, the strategy is laid to keep man, particularly the oppressed, docile and reconciled to his suffering" (p. 8). Jones syllogistically contended, on the specific platform of racial inequality, that if God existed and if God was all-powerful, then He has not been active in human affairs. Provocatively, Jones added another, more controversial condition: that if God existed, then He has been selective in the human ordeals in which He has chosen to intervene. Thus, Jones concluded, God is a White racist. Further, Jones lamented,

> Why has the anticipated amelioration of Black suffering not yet occurred; why is there still a double portion of Black suffering?...on what grounds can the Black theologian affirm that God's activity will be different in the future—i.e., effecting the liberation of Blacks—when present and past history of Blacks is oppression? (p. 12)

Overwhelmingly, however, African Americans have identified with the Christ through his sufferings on the cross (Douglas, 1994; Noel, 2005). Some theologians even have

asserted that, given the region that he was born into and biblical descriptions of hair like lamb's wool, Jesus *was* Black (Cone, 1970; Douglas, 1994; Walker, 2008; Wilmore, 1998). In her examination of African Americans and their relationship to Christianity, Douglas (1994) argued that the Blackness of Christ in the Black Church community has had "more to do with Christ's commitment to Black freedom than to Christ's appearance," as "far too many churches speak of the Christ who is against White racism while still displaying images of White male Christs in their buildings" (Douglas, 1994, p. 4). Moreover, Douglas contended that African Americans' imaging God as Black has functioned as a means of bolstering African Americans' self-esteem: by worshipping a God in *their* image, African Americans witnessed that Blackness was nothing of which to be ashamed (Douglas, 1994).

African American Image of God Research. Based on methodological limitations, researchers measuring African American Image of God have encountered inconclusive (Cook, 2003), confounding (Muller, 2004), and counterintuitive (Calhoun-Brown, 1999) results. For example, in her doctoral dissertation that measured the Image of God of African American women who grew up in homes in which there was no father present, Cook (2003) found no significant main effect for father status on Image of God. In the study, 55 women from absent father homes and 79 women from father present homes (average age 23.44) rated their Image of God using the Adjective Checklist. Because empirical measures to examine the African American Image of God have been few, researchers are still attempting to find ways to capture the construct in diverse samples (Hoffman et al., 2007).

Muller (2004) examined the Image of God in abused and non-abused African American and Caucasian American adolescent women in the Baltimore, Maryland, area. Her sample consisted of adolescents who ranged from 11 to 18 years of age, with 40% of participants identifying as Catholic, 17% as Baptist, 7% Lutheran, 4% Methodist, 4% AME, 16% other Christian, and 12% with no religious affiliation. Twenty-five women in the sample were abused African American participants, and 25 women in the sample were non-abused African American participants. The author reported the same distribution for White participants. Participants rated themselves and their God-image using the five-factor domains of the Adjective Checklist. The God-image was also assessed using Human Figure Drawings (Koppitz, 1968; HFD), a subjective measure in which participants illustrated their God-image. Based on the size of the drawing (i.e., God as tall or God as short), and based on the features in the drawing (i.e., God with no mouth, or God with large eyes), one could rate emotional indicators. Muller revealed that three emotional indicators were a significant sign of abuse. In this study, two certified school psychologists rated emotional indicators on the illustrations.

Muller reported a main effect on race ($eta^2 = .23$), such that African American girls imaged God differently from White American girls, regardless of abuse status. Among African American women, God was seen as less agreeable and less conscientious than among White American women. The author reported that such a profile would indicate that God was not very intellectual or responsible. In terms of abuse status, Muller reported that abused women in the sample had more emotional indicators on their God illustration than did non-abused women on the human figure drawing (an average of 2.88 vs. 1.80, $F(1,96)= 8.68$, $p < .004$). Interestingly, where White American women with

abuse status rated themselves as higher on neuroticism than non-abuse status participants, African American women participants with abuse status rated themselves as lower on neuroticism than non-abuse status participants. As neuroticism measures the tendency to experience negative affect like anxiety, depression, and hostility, it would appear that African American girls with abuse-status did not rate themselves as highly on this scale almost as if these young women were numb to or less likely to internalize their worry, sadness, and anger about the abuse status. One must question: where, then did these feelings go?

Muller's (2004) study provided support for the claim that African Americans view God differently from White Americans, even in the face of a shared abuse demographic. Muller iterated that the sample was drawn from within an inner city known to be violent (Baltimore), which may account for how participants made sense of their lives and formulated their God-image. A further limitation to the study was that the young women drew their Image of God, but no information was given as to whether the girls explained the significance of the Image to them, or whether the school psychologists made their interpretations independent of the participants' input. In addition, whereas three emotional indicators were needed for significance, the average emotional indicator for both the abuse-status and non-abuse status groups were less than three. Finally, although we have information about correlations on how the participants saw themselves, we do not have information about how the participants, particularly those in the abuse-status category, made sense of what happened to them or their God.

Calhoun-Brown (1999) hypothesized that Black Americans best made sense of their lives by imagining a Black Christ. In addition, Calhoun-Brown examined whether

this image influenced racial empowerment and whether it led to increased racial identification, affect, and/or political participation. The author hypothesized that a Black image of Christ would mediate the tendency to focus on an afterlife as the source of justice and peace (i.e., an other-wordly orientation) and would influence participants' racial empowerment. The sample in this study came from the National Black Politics Study conducted by the Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture at the University of Chicago in 1993. Calhoun-Brown reported that 1206 African American respondents participated in this survey. In the study, 36 % of respondents were male and 64% were female. A majority of respondents in the survey had some college education and made between $25,000 and $50,000 annually.

Calhoun-Brown revealed that she used relevant and related responses from the survey to gather data on religiosity, Image of God, racial empowerment, and political participation from of African Americans who attended a Black Church. Sample questions selected for analysis included "Blacks should participate in Black only organizations" (p. 200); "Awareness of the debate concerning the color of Christ;" and "Importance of Black Image of Christ in Church" (p. 204). Calhoun-Brown found that only 38% of respondents believed Jesus to be Black, 7% believed Jesus to be White, while the majority of the respondents believed Jesus was nonracial. In addition, Calhoun-Brown found that individuals who believed in a Black Image of Christ also believed in institutional autonomy, or enhancing the Black community and strengthening its institutions solely ($\beta = 2.94$, $p < .005$). Further, individuals who believed in a Black Image of Christ also believed in participating in non-electoral events, or political participation apart from voting ($\beta = 32$, $p < .05$). Counterintuitive to her hypothesis,

Calhoun-Brown found that having a Black Image of Christ did not positively influence the belief that Black Churches should be involved in politics, nor did it have a significant effect on the belief of racial solidarity. Further, a White Image of Christ was not disempowering or negative for African Americans, nor were different denominations related to racial empowerment.

Viewed alone, Calhoun-Brown's (1999) study would suggest that Image of God of a Black Americans might not differ from the Image of God of White Americans. At the same time, the author of this study posits that, in addition to computing dated information from a 1993 survey, Calhoun-Brown took the variable race at its face value and did not assess for the meaning and salience of race, or Racial Identity.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the researcher examined relevant literature about The Black Church, Racial Identity, and Image of God. Some important findings were that 92% of Black Americans polled in a survey revealed that they attended a Black Church, with more than 60% of respondents saying they were from the South (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). Likewise, historians have noted the historical significance of The Black Church (Adksion-Bradley et al., 2005; Douglas & Hopson, 2001; Ellison et al., 2008; Frame & Williams, 1996; Gilkes, 1980; McRae et al., 1999; Lee, 1999; Taylor et al., 2000; Ward, 2005), supplementing the importance of this institution. Researchers have found Racial Identity to be an important construct for Black Americans (Abrams & Trusty, 2004; Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Calhoun-Brown, 1999; Collins & Lightsey, 2001; Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997; Johnson et al., 2005;

McHale et al,, 2006; Moreland & Leach, 2001; Ogbu, 2004; ; Phelps et al., 2001; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005; Reese & Brown, 1995; Rowley et al., 1998; Smalls et al., 2007; Sullivan & Arbuthnot, 2007), particularly African Americans who have a shared cultural ancestry in slavery (Bagley & Copeland, 1994; Phelps et al., 2001; Utsey et al., 2008).

In her examination of The Black Church and Racial Identity, Martin (2001) found evidence that Racial Identity attitudes were related to The Black Church, especially a Black Church that focused on social activism and helping out the community (i.e., this-worldly). Unfortunately, a majority of the studies using Racial Identity assessments have done so with college populations (Hargow, 2001; Helms & Carter, 1991; Helms & Richardson, 1994; Parham & Helms, 1981; Wallace & Constantine, 2005), whose developmental levels may have influenced sample findings (Ivey et al., 2005; Piaget, 2000), especially amid the claim that one's Racial Identity grows and evolves in concert with the individual (Cunningham, 1997; Neblett et al., 2008).

Similarly, researchers seeking to measure the Image of God construct have done so with a number of methodological shortcomings (Gibson, 2007). Some measures assessing Image of God have been as subjective as researchers interpreting drawings of God (e.g., Muller, 2004) to researchers assessing God through a five-factor personality model measure (e.g., Cheston et al., 2003; Piedmont et al., 1997). Because Image of God is a construct that might exist outside of language (Gibson, 2007; Kunkel et al., 1999; Kwon, 2005), adjectives might not adequately capture the variable. Likewise, in their examination of the current literature in Image of God, Hoffman et al. (2007) suggested that researchers to date have focused too heavily on White samples that may, because of cultural and societal influences, image God differently from non-White samples.

In light of the literature, there is a profound need to converge literature from three distinct fields of study (i.e., The Black Church, Racial Identity, and Image of God) and add depth to the studies that have been conducted. It is important to get into the language of African Americans who attend a Black Church to discover Racial Identity attitudes and commonalities in Image of God they might hold. This study is a first step along a research agenda, with future research incorporating different populations within the Africa American population. Eventually the author seeks to create a quantifiable model that expands on the conceptual model and is culturally specific to African Americans.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

> Here's the thing, say Shug. The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. (Walker, 1982, p. 202)

Overview

This project began with a fictional imperative, "Tell me what your God look like" (Walker, 1982, p. 201). In the wake of that directive, we have discovered that Shug Avery, the literary foil and archetypal mentor to Walker's protagonist, imagined her God as a White man, one in whom she had lost interest. In the above conversation, Shug revealed what she sought to extricate from Celie: her Image of God. The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the specific steps that the researcher took in order to collect data from participants. The procedures associated with the current study, including research questions, data collection, the interview questions, instrumentation, and modifications from the pilot study are presented in this chapter.

Research Questions

The seven research questions of the current study, which were introduced in the first chapter, are listed below. Given the nature of a qualitative investigation, in which participants provide the data and researchers examine what is said rather than what is

believed, the researcher approached the research questions with no hypotheses concerning the direction of potential responses.

1. How do African Americans who attend a Black Church describe their Image of God?
2. To what extent do they use similar language to describe their parents?
3. To what extent do they use similar language to describe themselves (i.e. self-esteem)?
4. What other variables influence their God-image?
5. How does the type of Black church (other-worldly v. this-worldly) influence their God-Image?
6. How do Racial Identity attitudes influence attendance at and/or choice of a Black Church?
7. How do Racial Identity attitudes influence African Americans' God-image?

Participants

Participant Recruitment

A convenience sample was used to amass participants in the current study. When conducting Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR), the methodology that was used in this study, Hill et al. (1997) recommended that participants are sampled randomly, but acknowledged the unique challenges qualitative researchers experience with random sampling. To begin the participant recruitment process in the current study, the researcher contacted 2 personal contacts in the state of North Carolina in December 2009. The personal contacts briefly were told about the investigation, were emailed the recruitment letter (see Appendix D), and were asked to give the researcher's information to potential

participants. From these personal contacts, 4 participants volunteered to be interviewed. In addition, a personal contact volunteered to be interviewed. The researcher also gave a copy of the recruitment letter to the secretary of a Baptist Church in the Northeastern portion of North Carolina. No members from that church contacted the researcher to be interviewed. In January 2010, the researcher contacted 3 friends on the social networking site Facebook. The researcher sent the recruitment letter as a message on the social networking site. One participant agreed to be in the study from this method. The researcher contacted 3 personal contacts via telephone who had expressed interested in the study in the fall semester before the proposal seminar. All three personal contacts agreed to be interviewed. In January 2010, 2 participants also were recruited by the researcher's parents. By February 2010, the total number of potential participants was 11. From January to February, 8 interviews were conducted. In their article "A Guide to Conducting Consensual Qualitative Research," Hill et al. (1997) recommended a sample size of 8 to 15 participants "to have a large enough sample so that researchers can determine whether findings apply to several people or are just representative of one or two people" (p. 532). In the event that the research team was unable to find adequate representativeness in the sample, the remaining 3 potential participants would have been interviewed. Participants were located across the state of North Carolina. The final sample consisted equally of 4 men and 4 women. Participants ranged in age from 26 -58 years old with median age of 30.

Procedures

Eight African Americans who were at least 25-years-old and attended a rural Black Church at least once a month were interviewed and given a racial identity assessment. Researchers have found that people who attend church at least once a month have strong feelings of identification with the religion or with the religious institution (Martin, 2001; Reese & Brown, 1995). In addition, researchers have found enough age differences in individuals' Image of God (Dickie et al., 1997; Hoffman et al., 2008) and Racial Identity (Neblett et al., 2008) to suggest that sampling participants in adulthood is ideal. It is in early adulthood, middle, and later life that individuals critically examine their beliefs (Allport, 1593; Miller, 2005). Arguably, participants who are at least 25 years of age have garnished the cognitive ability to process both concrete and abstract thoughts (Ivey et al., 2005; Piaget, 2000) like imaging God in descriptive words and phrases.

At least one week before the interview, participants were emailed a copy of the informed consent and the interview questions. Interviews were conducted in a setting of the participants' choosing. Participants were labeled sequentially as Participants 1 through 8 in order of the date the interview was conducted. Participant 1 opted to meet the researcher for the interview. Interviews for participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 occurred in the homes of the participants. The interview for Participant 6 took place at her work office. On the day of the interview, the informed consent was explained to participants. In addition, participants were given the $15 gift card. Participants were told that the interview could last for up to 2 hours depending on how much information the participant shared. In addition, participants were told that the interviews would be audiotaped and

that the participant freely could leave the interview at any point in time, without any consequences. Total interview times (i.e., including the racial identity assessment) ranged from 37 minutes 46 seconds (Participant 3) to 1 hour and 33 minutes (Participant 1). In addition, participants were told that their participation in the study posed very little psychological risks or risks to participants' employability. Informed Consent for the full study can be found in Appendix C.

Interview Questions

Interview questions were created based on research questions, suggestions during the proposal seminar, and recommendations from the researcher's dissertation committee members. After participants signed the informed consent, they were given the following demographic sheet. A writing utensil was provided to participants:

Age_____

Gender_____

Income Estimate_____

Relationship Status_____

Education Level_____

Frequency of Church Attendance_____

Denomination_____

Did you grow up in the South? If so, what state and for how long

_____

How may I contact you to provide you with a copy of the interview after it has been transcribed? Check all that apply

☐ In person. If so, please provide your telephone # _____

☐ Through the mail. If so, please provide your Address

_____

_____

☐ Through email_____

After participants completed the demographic form, the researcher began audio recording the interview with the following interview questions:

1. When you hear the word God, what do you think?
2. When you hear the word God, what do you feel?

   *****Now, take a moment to go inside.***

3. What does God look like? For example, if I asked you to draw what you see, what would you draw?
   a. If I asked you to describe the God or Higher Power that you see in one word or phrase, what would that be? Please explain.
   b. What are the characteristics of this God?

4. Would you say that either or both of your parents have some of the same physical features and/or personal characteristics of this God-image? Explain? Which parent(s)?

5. Do you think that you have some of those physical features or characteristics? Why/why not?
6. Would you say that your Image of God is related to how you see yourself or your opinion of yourself?
7. Do you think any of the variables mentioned in the first question (a-h) influence or have influenced your image of God?
8. What do you think has influenced your Image of God the most?
9. Do you think this image has changed over time?
    a. If so, when and why?
10. How important is religion for you? Tell me more about that.
11. Why do you go to the church that you attend?
12. How important is your Black Church to you? Tell me more about that.
13. What is the most important aspect of your experience at the Black Church that you attend?
14. Would you say that your church mainly focuses on addressing social and political issues in the surrounding community and/or larger society (this-worldly) or would you say your church mainly focuses on survival and receiving compensation that would make it all worth it once you are in heaven and rejoined with God? (other-wordly). Scholars call this your church's orientation.
15. Do you think your church's orientation influences or has influenced your Image of God? Tell me more about that.

16. Do you think a person of another race who does not attend a Black Church would have the same Image of God that you have? Explain.
17. Does your pastor incorporate racial empowerment or pride with being Black into sermons? How?
18. What opinions, if any, do you have about what it means to be Black?
19. Do you think these opinions influence or have influenced your choice to attend a Black Church?
20. Do you think these opinions influence or have influenced your Image of God?
21. What is the most important aspect of your experience as a Black American?
22. Is there anything else that you would like to share/think is important or relevant to my
    study?
23. Is there anything you would like to add about your experience during this interview?

Participants were referred to as a sequential number based on the chronological order of the interviews. That sequential number was recorded on the upper left hand corner of the demographic form. Participants were asked the interview questions in a semi-structured manner, with follow-up questions as needed. The researcher recorded interviews with a digital audio recorder and made notes with an ink pen in a notebook that was used solely and confidentially for recording responses, impressions, and any other miscellaneous notes. The researcher took field notes during and after the interview about observations.

After the interviews were completed and as soon as possible, the demographic form was placed in a lock box that remained in the researcher's home office. Participants'

informed consent was placed in a lock box in the researcher's office on the campus of the university. Only the researcher had access to both lock boxes. Audio interviews were stored in a lock box that remained in the office of the researcher's home. Interviews were transcribed in the researcher's office. Audio interviews were destroyed from the digital recorder after the researcher transcribed the interview. Interviews were transcribed within a week of the actual interview. While transcribing, the researcher listened to interviews on headsets to offset the minimal possibility that information was heard by others. No identifiable characteristics of the participants were recorded save for age, gender, income estimate, relationship status, education level, frequency of church attendance, and number of years in the South. Copies of transcribed interviews were given to members of the research team to read over after each interview had been transcribed. Copies of transcribed interviews also were given to participants within 2 weeks of the interview in the manner that the participant had indicated on the demographic form. Hill et al. (1997) wrote that participants can be asked "to read the transcript carefully to see if they have any additions, corrections, or clarifications" (p. 543). Each individual interview was treated as a case and was analyzed using Consensual Qualitative Research, which is described in the next section.

Consensual Qualitative Research

Theoretical Foundation

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) is defined as an iterative process by which domains and themes are identified from a small number of interviewed participants (Hill et al., 2005; Hill et al., 1997). Hill et al. (1997) reported that CQR was strongly

influenced by a number of theories and approaches, including grounded theory, defined as a "conceptual network of related constructs about a phenomenon" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 520); Comparative Process Analysis, which is a method designed to analyze implicit meanings from therapy sessions; the phenomenological approach, or the belief that data is best understood in the context in which it emerges; and feminist theories. The authors revealed that CQR is a method that involves group cooperation and consensus, and a method in which categories emerge from the data and evolve as researchers increase their understanding of the data. Hill et al. (2005) posited that the philosophical underpinnings of CQR lie in the fact that people construct realities that are salient to them as "the truth" (p. 197).

The CQR Process

Hill et al. (2005) explained that the CQR approach utilizes a number of judges throughout the data analysis process in a way that elicits multiple perspectives (Hill et al., 2005), and minimizes the potentiality for individual researcher biases to influence data outcomes. In addition to working through the data, Hill et al. emphasized the importance of composition of the research team. Hill et al. suggested that the research team have three to five individuals who have some knowledge about the topic. In addition, research team members should show a willingness to compromise and remain cognizant of power differentials in the group. Because CQR relies heavily on group consensus and group dynamics, the research team should be comprised of individuals who can work together and who respect one another; group consensus is paramount in CQR (Hill et al., 1997), as fungible to the process as the qualitative outcomes elicited from participant responses.

Hill et al. (1997) suggested that the research team be assembled early in the research process to assist the primary investigator in creating research questions. More importantly, research team members must be trained on the CQR method using Hill et al. (2005) and Hill et al. (1997). To address undue subjectivity, Hill et al. (1997) wrote that research team members should participate in bracketing, an exercise where members record their expectations (what they thought would happen based on the literature) and biases (what they assume to be true from personal experience). Hill et al. (1997) wrote that these expectations and biases be included in the final write-up. In addition, Hill et al. (1997) wrote that CQR uses participants' words as much as possible, such that each researcher is "vigilant to ensure that his or her interpretations are reflective of the data" (p. 539). Additionally, an external auditor, whom Hill et al. (1997) compared to an editor, is used throughout the process along with the primary research team. Yeh and Inman (2007) summarized that the consensus of the research team and the use of an external auditor helps to maintain the objectivity in this qualitative approach.

To code data, Hill et al. (1997) reported three main steps of CQR: (1) developing and coding domains, (2) constructing core ideas, and (3) developing categories to describe consistencies across cases (cross-analysis). Hill et al. (1997) explained that domains are "used to group or cluster information or data about similar topics" (p. 543). For this reason, they indicated researchers might start with a list of domains that seem relevant based on the review of the literature. Before data collection, 6 preliminary domains were identified based on a review of the literature. Initial domains included: (a) characteristics of God, (b) characteristics of parents, (c) characteristics of church, (d) beliefs about church, (e) beliefs about race, and (f) other. Hill et al. wrote that research

team members would read one interview at a time and would not begin reading the next interview until a group consensus has been made about the former interview. In addition, research team members are to code data into what Hill et al. termed as rationally derived domains while abstracting core ideas.

Hill et al. (2005) explained that core ideas are the essence of what the person said, in each domain. Core ideas are abstracted from participants' responses. Accordingly, research team members are to agree upon domains and core ideas. Hill et al. (1997) wrote that all material from the interview should be placed in at least one domain. If needed, researchers can create an "other" domain to ensure that all data are included, even data that might seem unimportant. Hill et al. (1997) suggested that researchers are to make sure core ideas are relevant to the domain. This is achieved by maintaining copies of the raw data or actual transcriptions. In addition, Hill et al. (1997) suggested that double coding, or putting core ideas into more than one domain, should be kept to a minimum. This is done to maintain the clarity of the data.

Hill et al. (1997) explained that the external auditor would review the domains and core ideas on a case by case basis, making recommendations based on the logical clarity of the core idea within the domains. Hill et al. recommend that the external auditor determine "whether (a) the raw material is in the correct domain, (b) all the important material in the domain has been abstracted, and (c) the wording of the core ideas is concise and reflective of the raw data" (p. 548). After receiving feedback from the external auditor, it is recommended that team members meet and either accept or reject the auditor's suggestions based on group consensus. Hill et al. suggested that the more

feedback the external auditor provides, the more room for discussion team members have.

Once each case has been coded for domains and core ideas by research team members, reviewed by the external auditor, and sent back to the research team for a final group consensus, it is recommended that group members look at domains and core ideas across cases, what Hill et al. (2005) and Hill et al. (1997) called cross analysis. It is recommended that the research team copy core ideas from each of the single case domains onto a blank sheet of paper to be examined by research team members to determine how they congeal into categories. Hill et al. (1997) wrote that categories are "discovery oriented" (p. 550) and arrive from the data as opposed to expectations based on the literature or other theories. Research team members should describe the similarities between cases and apply wording that captures the "essence of the phenomenon in words" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 550). Hill et al. (1997) also wrote that in CQR, researchers could report findings based on the representativeness of categories to the sample, what Hill et al. (2005) called the "frequency of occurrence of the categories" (p. 200). The label of "general" is applied to all cases, "typical" is applied to at least half of the cases, and "variant" is applied to two or three but less than half of the cases (Hill et al., 2005, p. 200). The external auditor also should review the categories and frequency labels to make comments and suggestions; similar to the case by case process, the research team discusses these suggestions and reaches a group consensus.

Hill et al. (1997) wrote that researchers can test the stability of their findings by subtracting two to three cases from preliminary analysis. Once cross analysis has been conducted, researchers can add the aforementioned subtracted cases to see if "new

domains, categories, or relationships among categories emerge" (p. 553). If the results are not altered substantially by the new cases, Hill et al. (1997) said that researchers can assume that their findings are stable. If the results are altered by new cases, Hill et al. (1997) suggested that researchers include the subtracted cases one by one until there are no substantial changes in the results.

To describe the findings, Hill et al. (1997) wrote that researchers are to develop a written narrative of accounts across cases, write up the findings, and present the results in a clear and cogent manner. Hill et al. (2005) suggested that researchers write up summaries of each case and compare these to the narrative accounts that will summarize the cases. In addition, Hill el al. (1997) recommended that researchers include the domains and core ideas that illustrate the domain and/or category in chart form and in the write-up. Researchers can include examples of these case summaries to add richness in the write-up of the data. Finally, Hill et al. (1997) suggested that participants be presented the results to determine if what was found among the research team fits the individuals' experience.

Evaluating the Results of CQR

In terms of evaluating the CQR method, Hill et al. (1997) wrote that researchers evaluate CQR through trustworthiness of the method, coherence of the results, and representativeness of the sample. Trustworthiness of the method, or the degree to which the result can be trusted, is maintained by researchers carefully monitoring the data collection and data analysis process based on the self-reports of the research team and the availability of the raw data (i.e. transcribed interviews). In the current study, the

researcher provided participants with typed transcripts after the interview, a move that Hill et al. said upholds the trustworthiness of this method. In addition, in the current study, copies of transcripts were readily available, so that the research team could stay close to the raw data. The authors wrote that coherence of the results, or the logical account for all the data, is maintained by the researchers answering the research questions and reporting findings in a way that makes sense to outside readers. Because the current investigation is a dissertation study, it would have been impossible to receive approval from the committee and faculty if the research questions were not answered.

In addition, coherence also is maintained when researchers use a standardized measure along with CQR to examine the research questions. For example, the current study paired two scales from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (to be discussed in the **Instrument** section of this chapter) with the interview questions. Hill et al. (1997) wrote that "obtaining similar findings across methods increases the validity of the results" (p. 558). Further, Hill et al. explained that representativeness of the sample is maintained by researchers describing the data as general, typical, or variant. These authors suggested that doing preliminary analyses on 8-12 cases and adding additional cases to see if domains and core categories have stability or if they would change with the additional cases, also would validate the representativeness of the sample. Hill et al. also highlighted testimonial validity, or gathering input from interviewees, which was maintained in this study by communicating with participants and allowing them to provide feedback on the transcribed interviews. Hill et al. addressed the applicability of the results, or usefulness of findings as another evaluation of this method. The current study sought to provide useful information from an under-assessed population in the

Image of God literature. For this reason, the findings will be used to better understand the behaviors of a demographic of people. Finally, the authors list replication across samples as an additional way to evaluate the vigor of the CQR method.

Rigor of CQR in the Current Investigation. The current study is an investigation into three distinct areas of research: The Black Church, Racial Identity, and Image of God. The researcher identified a gap in the literature, finding no studies that sought to investigate whether these three variables interact. Hence, the researcher realized that a model would need to be created to guide her research agenda. To start at the beginning, however, the researcher needed a methodology that would address the uniqueness of participants' experiences while striving toward a model that would help to understand the behavior of a larger population. For this reason, the author chose CQR as the methodology.

In his examination of the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative methodologies, Ponterotto (2005) argued that CQR falls between a postpositivism philosophical paradigm, or a belief that there is a single shared reality, albeit one that can only be measured imperfectly, and a constructivism paradigm, or the belief that reality is constructed in the mind of the individual and shaped by the individual's experiences. With its reliance on research teams and external auditors, Ponterotto argued that CQR seeks to approximate one true reality, placing it under a postpositivist ontological paradigm. Because interviewers spend at least 60 minutes and use the same semi-structured interview questions with all interviewees, Ponterotto asserted that CQR falls under a postpositivist epistemological paradigm, as the researcher seeks to remain objective throughout the process. Finally, because the CQR methodology acknowledges

that researchers' values cannot be divorced from the process and therefore biases and expectations must be bracketed, Ponterotto wrote that CQR falls under a constructivist axiological paradigm. The researcher hopes to move between the individuals' unique experience (constructivism) and approach a broader understanding of the population (postpositivism). For this reason, CQR was the methodological fit.

Other researchers have evaluated the vigor of the CQR method. In their examination of qualitative data analyses, Yeh and Inman (2007) wrote that collaboration, self-exploration, rigorous check of the data with external auditors, and the circularity (i.e., "the complexity, depth, and comprehensiveness of qualitative research as it emerges" (p. 384)) of the CQR method attests to its validity and trustworthiness. Morrow (2007) placed CQR within the postpositivism paradigm, saying that CQR strives for objectivity as an ideal. Viewing CQR as more of a constructivist approach, Giles (1997) critiqued Hill et al. (1997) on the theoretical assumption of CQR that truth is found in group consensus, as group consensus may stifle creativity and may be influenced by the culture of the research team. In addition, Stiles (1997) argued that CQR lacks a clear theoretical foundation, which may account for the fact that Hill et al. (1997) were unable to address the types of qualitative validity that depend on individuals' growth or change. Stiles listed these as uncovering, or "readers gaining a new understanding of their experience," catalytic validity, or "participants changing their lives as a result of understandings gained in the study," and reflexive validity, or "modification and elaboration of the investigators prior theoretical understanding" (p. 596). In the interview questions that were used in the full study, participants were asked to share information that may have emerged during the course of the interview (see Appendix E).

Attesting to the applicability of this method, Hill et al. (2005) reported that there have been 27 studies that have used the CQR method. For example, researchers using CQR have investigated topics as diverse as contact experiences with gay men (Castro-Convers, Gray, Ladany, & Meltzer, 2005) and religious experiences of Muslim and Christian women (Ali, Mahmood, Moel, Hudson, & Leathers, 2008), to gay and lesbian training in counseling programs (Dillon, Worthington, Savoy, Rooney, Becker-Schutte, & Guerra, 2004), internship experiences for counselors in training (Stahl, Hill, Jacobs, Kleinman, Isenberg, & Stern, 2009), and client-therapist dynamics (Chang & Berk, 2009; Hayes, McCraken, McClanahan, Hill, Harp, & Carozzoni, 1998; Knox, Hess, Williams, & Hill, 2003).

Coding the Data

To analyze data collected from 8 participants using the CQR method, a research team and external auditor were established.

The Research Team

The research team was composed of the author, a 28-year-old African American woman who, because her father was a Pastor, grew up in a rural Black Church. In addition, the researcher has been embedded in the literature on Racial Identity and The Black Church for at least 2 years and Image of God literature for 10 months. The researcher's dissertation chair and member of the Counseling and Educational Development department (CED) faculty also was a member of the research team. The researcher's dissertation chair is a White woman who is the daughter of a minister of small, rural White churches in the South. In addition, the dissertation chair became familiar with the literature through the researcher's writings. The final member of the

research team was a 24-year old master's student in the CED department who is African American and has been exposed to a rural Black Church. The master's student was asked to be a part of the research team based on the researcher's knowledge that the master's student attended a Black church and wanted additional research experience.

Bracketing

On December 9, 2009, research team members met to complete the bracketing exercise. Research team members discussed their expectations and biases, including their image of God and Racial Identity (where applicable). The bracketing exercise was completed by each research team member and distributed at the first research team meeting. Because the researcher was also conducting the interviews, the researcher also completed the interview questions and the MIBI to share with the research team members in terms of her own expectations and biases. Additionally, an external auditor was used throughout the process. The external auditor is a professor of religious studies with an expertise in the area of African American religious history and serves on the researcher's dissertation committee. Yeh and Inman (2007) summarized that the consensus of the research team and the use of an external auditor helps to maintain the objectivity in this qualitative approach.

Coding Process

Based on a review of the literature, 6 preliminary domains were assigned: (a) characteristics of God, (b) characteristics of parents, (c) characteristics of church, (d) beliefs about church, (e) beliefs about race, and (f) other. As research team members read the interviews, the list of domains expanded and were assigned to specific research questions. In the bracketing meeting, it was suggested by a research team member that

each member be assigned a specific domain to pay attention to in each transcript and to color code what the team member found. Each research team member was given 2 domains for which to code. Research team members were given a copy of the first transcript in early January. Research team members were encouraged to read the transcript while paying attention to the two codes they were assigned. Because of scheduling conflicts and inclement weather, the first research team meeting did not take place until February 17, 2010. In the first research team meeting, research team members shared their impressions of the first interview. Domains that had been coded by research members also were shared in the first meeting. At the conclusion of the first meeting, research team members were assigned two additional domains for which to code by the following research team meeting. The first interview was reread by research team members who coded 2 new domains. In this way, the research team acted as an internal auditor, as each research team member would have her domains coded by another person. Each interview was coded and internally audited by research team members. A new domain emerged from the data: "beliefs about God." In addition, research team members began to note distinctions in participants' description of their home church, the Black church, and the church. These three entities also were coded.

Research team members met on 5 occasions in the months of February and March. Each interview was treated as a case. In the first four meetings, research team members were given additional transcripts to have read by the next meeting. Meetings were scheduled on a weekly basis and, at least 2 days before the next research team meeting, members of the research team would email their codings of the interview. Typically, meetings lasted one hour and research members discussed her impressions of

each case and, if applicable, her justification for coding an item. Impressions were recorded as were moments when group members disagreed over an impression of an interview.

After the fifth interview was coded, the researcher created a rough table of domains, core ideas, and categories to share with the research team and the external auditor. In this way, a stability check was done to see if there was a representativeness of the sample that was taking shape. After the 4th research team meeting, the external auditor was given transcripts from participants 1-5 and a copy of the rough table of domains, core ideas, and categories. The external auditor gave his impressions and insights about the transcripts and the rough table. After the external auditor commented on transcripts 1-5, he was given transcripts 6-8 for review.

In the fifth and final meeting, which was two hours in length, research team members discussed coding and impressions of the last three transcripts. In addition, research team members reviewed the comments of the external auditor and made recommendations on the rough table of domains, core ideas, and categories. Transcripts 6-8 were compared with the rough table that was created. The domains and the core ideas that were deciphered from transcripts 1-5 showed stability. After this meeting, the researcher incorporated suggestions from the research team and the external auditor and created a better table that illustrated the domains, core ideas, categories and labels from all 8 cases. This table was emailed out to group members and the external auditor and changes were made to it based on their recommendations.

Instrument

To assess for participants' racial identity attitudes, the following instrument was included.

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity

Sellers et al. (1997) created the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) to operationalize Sellers et al.'s (1998) Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). The MIBI measures the phenomenological extent to which an individual defines himself or herself racially. To create the MIBI, Sellers et al. (1997) amalgamated existing scales on measures of racial, ethnic, and social identity. In addition, the authors reported incorporating items into the measure that were consistent with their scale definitions. Three scales were created: the centrality scale, the regard scale, and the ideology scale. Sellers et al. (1997) reported that centrality measured the extent to which an individual normatively defines himself or herself by race, regard was defined as the individual's evaluative and affective judgment about his or her race, and ideology measured the individual's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes about how African Americans should act. The authors reported two subscales for the regard scale: how positively or negatively being Black is seen by others (public regard) and how positively or negatively being Black is seen by the individual (private regard). In addition, the authors revealed four ideological subscales: nationalist (which emphasizes that uniqueness of being Black), oppressed minority (which finds commonalities between African Americans and other oppressed groups), assimilation (which finds commonalities between African Americans and other Americans), and humanist (which finds commonalities between African Americans and all other cultures).

Sellers et al. (1997) originally tested the MIBI on 474 African American students (185 students who attended a predominately-Black university and 289 who attended a predominately-White university). The sample of the original study was largely female (68% of participants), and the authors reported median family income between $45,000 to $54,999. The original MIBI measure contained 71-items. The authors performed a statistical evaluation of factor analysis on the scales. Using a statistical score of .60 as a cutoff on a scale between zero and one, the authors discovered that a one-factor solution for all three scales was not an adequate factor structure. That is, when the MIBI was assessed for one overall score that would explain Racial Identity, the resulting score was not at least .60. However, when the authors conducted the evaluation of factor analysis on the three scales separately, they were able to meet the .60 cutoff (.86 for the Ideology Scale, .83 for the Centrality Scale, and .61 for the Regard Scale). The authors used this statistic as evidence that the MIBI measured three interrelated constructs as opposed to one single factor. For this reason, results from the MIBI are presented as a multidimensional construct along the three areas of centrality, regard, and ideology.

Using confirmatory factor analysis to find which items would hang together, the authors streamlined the measure from 71-items to 56 items. Final data analyses yielded the public regard scale as inconsistent; the authors thus discarded this scale from the measure because the internal consistency of the scale was low. What resulted was a 51-item measurement. Sellers et al. (1997) reported that the MIBI scales demonstrated adequate internal consistency, with internal consistency as low as $\alpha = .60$ for private regard to as high as $\alpha = .79$ for the nationalist subscale. Although the authors used a 51-item measurement in their original study, Sellers et al. (1997) reported that they

addressed the problematic items on the public regard scale. Currently, the MIBI is a 56-item, 7-point Likert scale measurement (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Sample items from MIBI are as follows: (1) examples from the regard scale are "I feel good about Black People" (private regard) and "Overall, Blacks are considered good by others" (public regard) and (2) a sample item from the centrality scale is "In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image." Sample items from the ideology subscales are as follows: (a) assimilation scale: "A sign of progress is that Blacks are in the mainstream of America like never before"; (b) humanist scale: "Black values should not be inconsistent with human values"; (c) oppressed minority scale: "The struggle for Black liberation in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups"; and (d) nationalist scale: "It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music, and literature."

Sellers et al. (1997) reported that they assessed the predictive validity of the MIBI by investigating race-related behaviors of the 474 participants. They speculated that individuals to whom race was important would have a best friend who was African American and would be enrolled in or would have taken a course in Black Studies. The authors reported that individuals who indicated that they had a Black best friend had higher scores on the centrality scale, F (1, 472) = 12.35, $p < .01$, and the nationalist subscale, F (1, 472) = 37.45, $p < .01$, than on the assimilation, F (1, 472) = 19.26, $p < .01$, humanist F (1, 472) = 12.45, $p < .01$, and oppressed minority F (1, 472) = 19.68, $p < .01$, subscales. The authors also reported that students who were enrolled in or took a Black studies course scored higher on the centrality scale F (1, 472) = 7.98, $p < .01$, and nationalist subscale F (1, 472) = 18.32, $p < .01$. Hence, students for whom being Black

was seen as important were likely to normatively define themselves as Black and hold pro-Black sentiments. In addition, Sellers et al. used interscale correlations to test the construct validity of the MIBI. The authors reported that individuals who indicated high race centrality also were likely to have high positive private regard (r = .37, α = .02) and high nationalist ideological beliefs (r = .57, α = .02), and were less likely to support assimilation (r = -.19, α = .02) and humanist (r = -.29, α = .02) ideological beliefs. The authors used these statistics as evidence of significant relationships between people's race-related activities and the ability of the MIBI to measure what it says it measures (i.e., validity).

Cokley and Helm (2001) also tested the construct validity of the MIBI. In their sample of 279 African American college students (164 at a predominantly White university and 112 at an HBCU) from the Southeastern and Midwestern United States, Cokley and Helm found that high race centrality was associated with nationalist ideological beliefs (r = .47, p < .001) and high positive private regard for African Americans (r = .42, p < .001). Cokley and Helm also reported that the assimilation subscale was positively correlated with the humanist subscale (r = .58, p < .001) and was negative correlated with the nationalist subscale (r = -.39, p < .001). In addition, the authors found internal consistencies in the .60 range and above. Although Cokley and Helm (2001) found construct validity for the MIBI, the authors admitted unease with items on the ideology subscales, exemplified in the nationalist scale, which purports to measure pro-Black sentiments. Cokley and Helm argued that some of the nationalist items on the MIBI scale also point to anti-White beliefs (e.g., "White people can never be trusted where Blacks are concerned").

Simmons, Worrell, and Berry (2008) retested the internal consistency of the MIBI with confirmatory factor analysis. Examining responses of 225 African American students, the authors found internal consistencies ranging from α =.59 (assimilation scale) to α = .78 (private regard). Kaplan (1997) warned that internal consistencies in the .50 range are poor. Because internal consistency measures how items co-vary in an instrument, when the alpha reaches .50, we say this could be due to chance; likewise, the instrument may not measure what it purports to measure. Cokley and Helm suggested that, as the MIBI is a newly developed scale, internal consistencies in the .70 range are acceptable, but further research is needed.

MIBI in the Current Investigation

The current investigation used the race centrality and ideology subscales of the MIBI. Smalls, White, Chavous, and Sellers (2007) examined racial ideological beliefs and race centrality in a sample of African American adolescents; the authors found these two scales to be most helpful in capturing Racial Identity attitudes. In addition, Sellers et al. (1997) reported that the results of the Regard scale were not convincing as a valid scale. In terms of validity, the researcher chose not to include the regard scale. Sellers et al. explained that centrality provides information on the extent to which an individual identifies as a Black American (centrality), while ideology provides information on the beliefs and individual holds about how Blacks should act, think, and behave (ideology). Currently 44-items on the MIBI measure racial ideology and race centrality.

The means and standard deviation of from the centrality and ideology subscales were scored for each participant. The race centrality scale and the four ideology subscales were assessed on a 7-point likert. Therefore, the midpoint on these scale would be a mean

score of at least a 3.5. A higher score on the centrality scale (i.e., *M* centrality > 3.5), for example, informed the research team on the extent to which the participant normatively defined himself or herself as Black. The highest mean score on the four ideology subscales was used to determine which ideology a participant selected as being the way that Black Americans should act, think, and behave. Researchers have used the ideological and centrality scales of the MIBI to assess for Racial Identity attitudes (Martin, 2001; Smalls et al., 2007).

Interview questions were analyzed to ascertain the subjective interpretation of participants' Racial Identity attitudes. Concurrent with finding domains, core ideas, and coding the frequency of categories of core ideas, the researcher also checked for consistencies and discrepancies between what was assessed from the Racial Identity measure and what was said by the participant in the interview. Data obtained from the MIBI and responses to qualitative questions were comparable.

Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was twofold. First, the researcher wanted to conduct a pilot interview with an individual who resembled individuals in the target population (Hill et al., 1997). Secondly, the pilot study was conducted to receive feedback on the interview process, including the logistics of the initial interview questions and the duration of the interview. The researcher was made aware of a potential interviewee through her dissertation chair. The potential interviewee was identified as an African American woman who may attend a Black Church, but who was also a researcher and thus could be informative about the interview process.

Participant

The pilot study participant identified as a 54-year old African American woman working in a Southern university. The interviewee identified as a divorced, middle to upper middle class woman with her PhD. The interviewee, who has lived in the South her entire life, revealed that she attends a Black Church every Sunday and considerd religion to be important in her life completely.

Initial Interview Questions

Initial interview questions were drafted by consulting a CED faculty member who is an experienced researcher of Spirituality and Religion. Initial interview questions can be found in Appendix E.

Procedure

After the researcher received IRB approval for the pilot study, the researcher contacted the potential participant. The participant revealed that she attended a Black Church and gave her consent to be interviewed as a participant and to reflect on the interview process for the Pilot Study as a critically thinking researcher. The interviewee was told that the interview would last up to 1.5.

On the day of the interview, the interviewee was given the informed consent for the pilot study. The researcher also provided verbal instructions about the pilot study. After the informed consent was signed, the interviewee was given a $15 dollar gift card, as was explained in the informed consent. The interviewee refused the gift card. The interviewee was given the MIBI to complete. After the participant completed the MIBI,

the researcher explained that the results from the MIBI would be scored and that the interviewee would receive information about the assessment when she received a copy of the transcript. At this point, the researcher began the interview. The qualitative interview lasted 1 hour and 37 minutes, for a total assessment time of 1 hour and 54 minutes. At the completion of the interview, the interviewee was informed that she would receive the typed transcript within 2 weeks. In addition, the interviewee was informed that her transcript would be used as a training exercise for the research team and external auditor in preparation for the larger dissertation study.

Results

After the interview was completed, the researcher gave the interviewee a moment to reflect upon the interview process. The interviewee indentified four areas for consideration in the larger study. (1) The interviewee recommended that either the interview questions be edited or the researcher inform participants that interviews will take 2 hours to complete. Because Hill et al. (1997) recommended that CQR last between 30 minutes to 1 hour, the researcher modified interview questions. The interviewee felt that each question was important, so she could did not offer feedback on which potential questions to eliminate or combine.

In addition, the researcher revised the interview questions using more colloquial language so as to be more inclusive for participants who may not have a PhD as the pilot study interviewee did, or have an advanced degree in the pursuit of a PhD, like the researcher. (2) The interviewee recommended that participants be given the interview questions beforehand. The interviewee expressed that the questions required depth of

thought and expressed that her answers may have been more targeted and focused had she had the questions before hand. During the interview, the researcher noted instances when the interviewee seemed to pause and become pensive around questions. Hill et al. (1997) also suggested giving questions to participants ahead of time to be helpful in studies that require reflection. (3) The interviewee liked taking the order of the interview, with the MIBI presented first and the interview second. The interviewee revealed that this questionnaire prepared her for what would come in the interview. (4) The interviewee recommended the researcher be available to answer questions and talk through items of the MIBI to participants who may have questions.

Modifications

Based on Participant X's recommendations and recommendations from the proposal seminar, interview questions about Image of God were modified to assess for thoughts about God, feelings about God, a concrete visual image of God, and the characteristics of God.

A demographic questionnaire was created such that the qualitative interview would begin with open-ended questions, as per Hill et al.'s (1997) recommendation. Interview questions also were modified to reflect the research questions directly whereas, in the pilot study, some interview questions were slightly off topic. For example, the question "Reflecting on the sermons that you have heard, would you say that there is a unifying theme in your pastor's messages? If so, what would you say that theme is?" was revised to ask, "Does your pastor incorporate race or being Black into sermons? How?" In addition, the researcher included more colloquial language so as to be inclusive of

more diverse samples. Interview questions also were streamlined to follow a logical progression. That is, questions one through nine assessed participants' Image of God, questions 10-18 assessed the participants' Black Church, and question 19 assessed the participant's experience as an African American. Between questions 17 and 18, participants were administered the MIBI. This decision was made based on recommendations to provide participants with a break in the interviewing process.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

> God ain't a he or a she, but a It. But what do it look like? I ast. Don't look like nothing, she say. It ain't a picture show. It ain't something you can look at apart from anything else, including yourself. (Walker, 1982, p. 202)

Overview

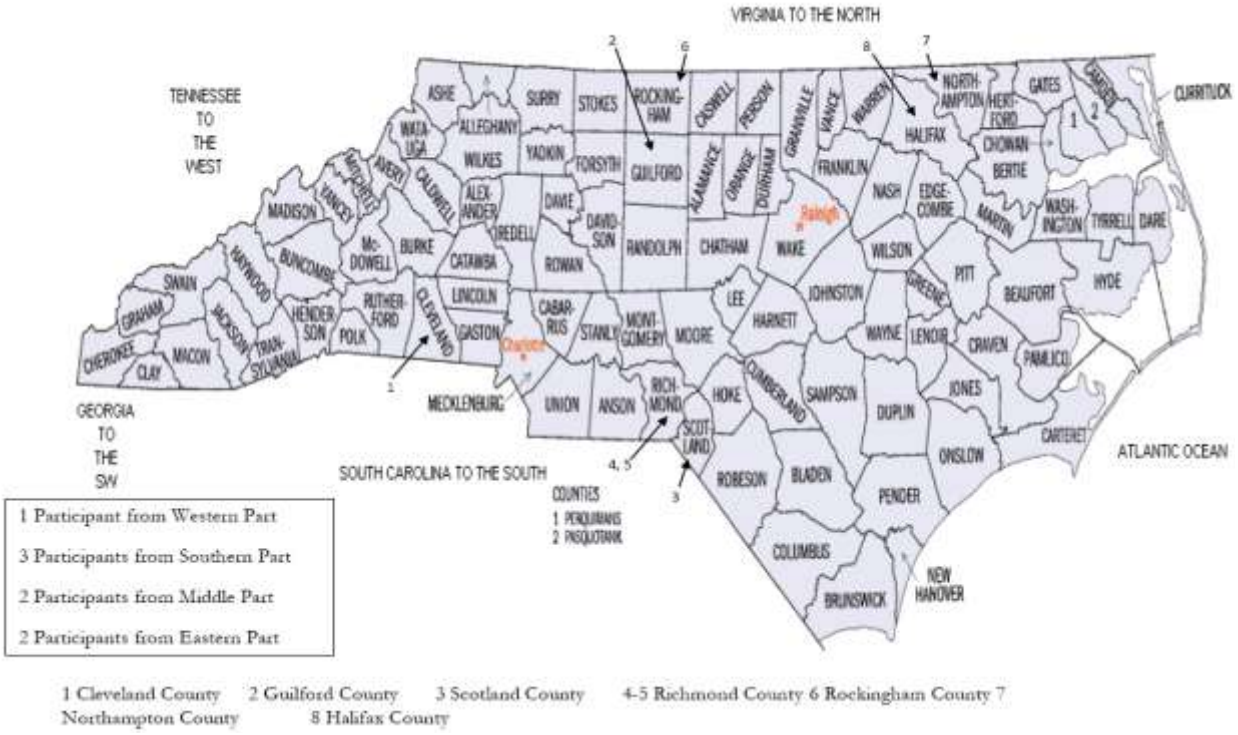
The current study investigated the Image of God and Racial Identity of eight African Americans over the age of 25 who attend a Black Church at least once a month. Participants were interviewed using interview questions found in Appendix E. In addition, the researcher assessed participants' racial identity using the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). As in the above conversation between Celie and Shug, this chapter will illustrate participants' actual image of God and, to adopt Shug's language, the extent to which participants were able to look at that image both apart from and as a part of themselves. For this reason, demographic information from participants are presented first. Secondly, the MIBI results are presented. Finally, results from the qualitative interview are reported and analyses related to each research question are provided.

Sample Characteristics

The current study consisted of data from 8 participants from the state of North Carolina. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were contacted by the researcher and asked to participate in the study. Participants 6, 7, and 8 were told about the study and contacted the researcher to be included in the study. The researcher met participants in their respective locales and conducted the interviews. Interview times ranged from 37 minutes 46 seconds (Participant 3) to 1 hour and 33 minutes (Participant 1). Participants were located across the state of North Carolina as illustrated in Figure 5. Western, northern, northeastern, central, and southern parts of the state were represented. One participant lived in Cleveland county, 1 participant lived in Guilford county, 1 participant lived in Halifax county, 1 participant lived in Northampton county, 2 participants lived in Richmond county, 1 participant lived in Rockingham county, and 1 participant lived in Scotland county.

Participants ranged in age from 26 - 58 years old with median age = 30. The sample consisted of 4 men and 4 women. Six participants were married and 6 participants had at least a college degree. Participant income estimate in the study ranged from $15,000 to $225,000, with a median income = $39,500. Monthly church attendance ranged from 2 times per month to 8 times per month, with average monthly church attendance at 3.88 times per month. Seven participants identified their denomination as Baptist with one participant identifying his denomination as Methodist (Participant 4). Each participant revealed that he or she had lived in North Carolina for their entire life. Demographic data can be found in Table 1. The mean, median, and mode for age, income estimate, and monthly church attendance can be found in Table 2.

Figure 5: Counties of North Carolina and Participant Locales



1 Cleveland County 2 Guilford County 3 Scotland County 4-5 Richmond County 6 Rockingham County 7 Northampton County 8 Halifax County

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Age	#	Gender	Income Estimate	Occupation	Relationship Status	Education Level	Church Attendance per month	Interview Length
26	5	Female	$37,000	Teacher	Married	College Graduate	3	1 hour 20 minutes
27	1	Male	$50,000	Hair Stylist	Single	College Graduate	4	1 hour 33 minutes
28	2	Female	$36,000	Teacher	Single	College Graduate	2	44 minutes 41seconds
28	6	Female	$42,000	Journalist	Married	College Graduate	4	1 hour 28 minutes
32	4	Male	$37,000	Teacher	Married	Graduate Degree	3	1 hour 20 minutes
52	3	Female	$120,000	Self-Employed	Married	High School Graduate	4	37 minutes 46 seconds
53	7	Male	$225,000	Doctor	Married	MD	3	48 minutes 55 seconds
58	8	Male	$15,000	Handyman	Married	High School Graduate	8	1 hour 3 minutes

Interview with husband and wife both present in the room. Questions were asked of each participant (separately) and responses typed in two different transcripts.

Table 2 *Participant Mean, Median, and Mode for Age, Income, and Monthly Church Attendance*

	Age	Income Estimate	Frequency of Church Attendance
Mean	38	$70, 250	3.88
Median	30	$39, 500	3.5
Mode	28	$37,000	4

MIBI Results

During the interview, between questions 17 and 18, participants were told about the MIBI and asked to complete it. MIBI assessment times ranged from 5 minutes (Participant 6) to 14 minutes (Participant 2) with an average assessment time of 11 minutes. The MIBI is an assessment of one's racial identity along three areas: centrality, regard, and ideology. MIBI questions can be found in Appendix B. The MIBI provides a phenomenological composite for the extent to which an individual identifies himself or herself as Black (centrality), the evaluative judgment the individual places on being Black (regard, not examined in this study), and the opinions that an individual has about how Blacks should think, act, and behave (ideology). Given the psychometric inconsistencies of the regard scale (Cokley & Helm, 2001), and given that researchers have used the centrality and ideology scale as a barometer of an individual's racial identity attitudes (Smalls et al., 2007), only the centrality and ideology subscales were examined in this sample (See Table 3).

Table 3 *Ideology Subscale Means*

Age	#	*M* Centality	*SD*	*M* Assimilation	*SD*	*M* Humanist	*SD*	*M* Minority	*SD*	*M* Nationalist	*SD*
52	3	2.25	1.49	6	1.32	6.43	1.13	4.78	1.86	3.89	1.97
58	8	4.25	2.38	5.44	1.94	5.33	2.06	4.56	1.51	3.67	2.45
53	7	5.13	2.1	6.89	.33	6.89	.33	3.44	1.51	3.11	2.03
32	4	5.38	1.77	5.78	1.30	5.44	1.81	4.67	1.51	4.56	2.18
27	1	5.44	1.45	5	1.46	6.17	1.15	5.06	1.21	3.67	2.19
28	6	5.75	1.17	4.89	.60	5.56	1.42	4.67	1.22	3.22	2.59
28	2	6	0.54	6	.71	5.22	1.09	5.44	.88	3.44	1.94
26	5	6.25	0.71	5.33	1.23	4.44	1.88	4.33	1.73	4.67	2.18

Highest Ideology Subscale Mean Score

Ideology is defined as the individual's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes about how African Americans should act, think, and behave. Sellers et al. (1997) reported that ideology operates along four areas: "political and economic development, cultural and social activities, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group" (p. 27). The four ideological subscales are defined as nationalist, or the extent to which a person emphasizes the uniqueness of being Black; oppressed minority, or the extent to which a person finds commonalities between Black Americans and other oppressed groups; assimilation, or the extent to which a person emphasizes the similarities between African Americans and the dominant society; and humanist, or the extent to which a person finds similarities among all humans. Sample items from each subscale include the following: "White people can never be trusted where Blacks are concerned" (nationalist), "There are other people who experience racial injustice and indignities similar to Black Americans" (oppressed minority), "We are all children of a higher being, therefore, we should love people of all races" (humanist), and "Because America is predominantly

White, it is important that Blacks go to White schools so that they can gain experience interacting with Whites" (assimilation).

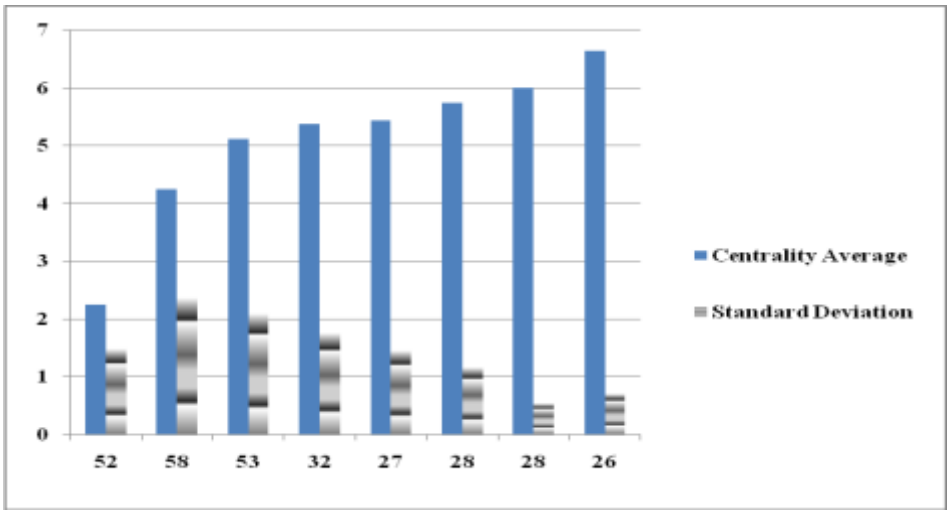
The sample size was too small to make any meaningful statements about the MIBI. However, when paired with responses to interview questions, a trend did emerge. All participants' highest mean ideology subscale score was in the humanist or assimilation ideology. For one participant, there was a tie between humanist ideology and assimilation. That is, participants in this sample typically believed that African Americans shared similarities with the dominant group (assimilation) or that African Americans were an amalgamated part of the human race (humanist). The highest ideology subscale score, along with the corresponding participant and the participant's mean race centrality score are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4 *Centrality Means, Standard Deviations and Highest Ideology Subscale*

Age	#	Centrality Average	Standard Deviation or item variance	Highest Ideology Score	Ideology
52	3	2.25	1.49	6.43	Humanist
58	8	4.25	2.38	5.44	Assimilation
53	7	5.13	2.1	6.89	Tied – Humanist/Assimilation
32	4	5.38	1.77	5.78	Assimilation
27	1	5.44	1.45	6.17	Humanist
28	6	5.75	1.17	5.56	Humanist
28	2	6	.54	6	Assimilation
26	5	6.25	.71	5.33	Assimilation

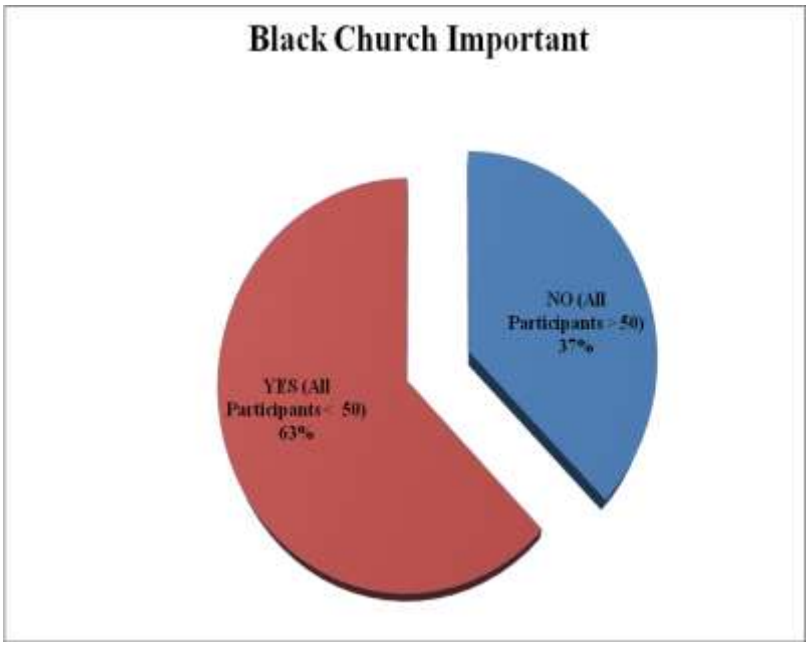
In addition to racial ideology, Tables 3 and 4 illustrated the chasm between participants over 50 and under 50 years of age in terms of race centrality. Participants who were older (age > 50), had lower race centrality scores than participants who were younger (age < 50). Participants who were older (age > 50) also had more variability around the mean (i.e., high standard deviation scores) than younger (age < 50) participants. Sellers et al. (1998) defined centrality as the extent to which a person normatively defines himself or herself by their race. Hence, a person with a high race centrality score is more likely to identify himself or herself as Black or Black American. Sample items from the Centrality scale include, "in general, being Black is an important part of my self-image" and "Being Black is an important reflection of who I am." Hence, older participants were less likely to say that being Black was a central part of their identity and were more likely to have varying responses to items on the Centrality scale. The race centrality scale ranged from 1 to 7, therefore the midpoint on this scale would be a mean score of at least a 3.5. The two participants (Participant 2 and Participant 5) who had the highest mean score was high (M centrality ≥ 6), also had the lowest standard deviation scores on that scale ($SD < 1$), suggesting very little variability in responses to the questions. These participants were more likely to strongly agree with the items on the centrality scale. Figure 6 highlights this discrepant data.

Figure 6: Graph of Race Centrality by Age



During the interviews when participants who were over the age of 50 were asked if the Black Church was important to them, all 3 participants over 50 answered that the Black Church was not important to them whereas participants who were younger than 50 all answered affirmatively that the Black Church was important to them.

Figure 7: Subjective Importance of the Black Church Pie Graph



This age-related trend is explained in greater detail in the **MIBI and CQR** section of the paper.

Research Questions

Research questions were created to investigate the Image of God and Racial Identity attitudes of African Americans who were at least 25-years-old and attended a Black Church at least once a month. Seven research questions were used to inform the creation of interview questions.

1. How do African Americans who attend a Black Church describe their Image of God?
2. To what extent do they use similar language to describe their parents?

3. To what extent do they use similar language to describe themselves (i.e. self-esteem)?
4. What other variables influence their God-image?
5. How does the type of Black church (other-worldly v. this-worldly) influence their God-Image?
6. How do Racial Identity attitudes influence attendance at and/or choice of a Black Church?
7. How do Racial Identity attitudes influence African Americans' God-image?

Overall Summary of Findings

Based on a review of the literature, before coding any interviews, six domains were identified: (a) characteristics of God, (b) characteristics of parents, (c) characteristics of church, (d) beliefs about church, (e) beliefs about race, and (f) other. As research team members read the interviews, the list of domains expanded and were assigned to specific research questions. Research Question 1 asked How do African Americans who attend a Black Church describe their Image of God? To answer this research question, the following domains were assigned: (1) imagery, (b) cognitions, (c) feelings, (d) characteristics of God, and (d) beliefs about God. Research Question 2 asked to what extent do [African Americans] use similar language to describe their parents. To answer this research question, the domain of "descriptions of parents" was assigned. Research Question 3 asked to what extent do [African Americans] use similar language to describe themselves (i.e. self-esteem). The domain "descriptions of self" was assigned to answer this question. Research Question 4 asked What other variables influence [African Americans'] God-image? The domain "influences on Image of God" was

assigned to answer this question. Research Question 5 asked How does the type of Black church (other-worldly vs. this-worldly) influence [African Americans'] God-Image? To answer this research question, the domain, "church orientation" was assigned. Research Question 6 asked How do Racial Identity attitudes influence attendance at and/or choice of a Black Church? To answer this research question, "attitudes about what it means to be Black" and "opinions about the Black Church" were assigned as domains. Research Question 7 asked How do Racial Identity attitudes influence African Americans' God-image? The domain "African American Image of God" was assigned to answer this question.

CQR was used to analyze interview responses. Hill et al. (1997) created CQR to afford researchers the opportunity to investigate qualitative data as objectively as possible through the use of group consensus. CQR is a methodology housed in both the postpositive and constructivist paradigm. That is, there is a truth that can be measured, but researchers also must be aware of their dynamic effect in the data collecting and analyzation process. For this reason, a research team of 3 individuals was created to analyze the data. Table 5 illustrates the domains, core ideas, and categories from the 8 cases based on conversations and suggestions that emerged during research team meetings. In this study, the label *general* was applied when the category was evident in 6-8 cases, *typical* was applied when the category was evident in 4-5 cases, and *variant* when the category was evident in 2-3 cases. No label was assigned to a category of one case, nor were any one case categories included in the table.

Table 5 *Research Questions and CQR Domains, Core Ideas, Categories, and Frequency of Responses*

Research Question	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondents	Label
How do African Americans who attend a Black Church describe their Image of God	Imagery	"not an actual image" (2)	Light	(1)(2)(4)(6)	Typical
		"we are made in His image" (7)	Male/ father-figure	(1)(2)(3)(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	General
			Has a human form	(2)(4)(5)(7)(8)	Typical
			Projected Image	(3)(5)(8)	Variant
			White when younger	(1)(2)(5)	Variant
	Cognitions	"a greater more powerful being" (6)	Higher power/being	(2)(4)(6)(7)	Typical
			Spirit	(5)(6)(8)	Variant
			Creator	(1)(6)(7)	Variant
	Feelings	"Kind of fearful" (3)	Want to please Him	(3)(4)(5)	Variant
		"A calming presence to me" (6)	Peaceful	(2)(4)(6)	Variant
			Content	(2)(7)	Variant
			Secure	(6)(7)(8)	Variant
		"honored to be in His presence" (5)	Humble	(4)(5)	Variant
	Characteristics of God	"able to do things normal mortals can't do"	Omnipotent	(1)(2)(3)(5)(6)(7)	General
			Consuming/all-	(1)(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	General

		(2)	encompassing		
		"Someone that can just see you through" (3)	Dependable	(2)(3)(4)(6)	Typical
			Knowledgeable	(2)(3)(6)	Variant
		"I think of him as being caring" (5)	Compassionate	(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			Loving	(5)(6)(7)	Variant
			Soothing	(1)(4)(6)	Variant
	Beliefs about God	"Am I doing everything I can to please Him?" (3)	Have to live right	(1)(3)(4)(5)	Typical
			Heaven litmus test (will I go to heaven?)	(2)(3)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
			Put others first	(3)(8)	Variant
		"He has good things out for me" (6)	Providence	(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
		"God had a special place for Black people" (8)	Identifies with Struggle of Blacks	(5)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
		"[Dependent on] the context where God is presented" (1)	Distant God	(1)(6)	Variant
		"It's got to be in you" (8)	Internal	(1)(5)(8)	Variant
To what	Descriptions of Parents	"I can see them showing those characteristics in	Mom positive energy	(1)(2)(6)(8)	Typical

extent do they use similar language to describe their parents?		different ways" (1)	Mom nurturing	(1)(6)	Variant
			Dad more distant	(1)(8)	Variant
			Dad positive characteristics very influential	(5)(6)	Variant
		"Both of them" (4)	Loving	(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			A Good resource	(3)(4)(5)(6)(8)	Typical
			Invested in development	(3)(5)(6)(8)	Typical
			Forgiving	(4)(5)(7)	Variant
To what extent do they use similar language to describe themselves	Description of Self	"I try to model myself to an extent as much as I can" (4)	Dependable	(2)(3)(8)	Variant
			Caring for Others	(3)(4)(7)	Variant
			Peaceful	(4)(6)	Variant
What other variables influence their God-image?	Influences on Image of God	"I grew up in a very religious family" (2)	Family	(1)(2)(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	General
			Childhood churchgoing foundation	(1)(2)(4)(5)(6)(7)	General
		"I'm going to go to church at least 3 times a month, if not 4"(4)	Bible	(2)(5)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
			Regular Church Attendance	(2)(4)(6)(8)	Typical
			Pastor/word	(2)(7)(8)	Variant
		"My own personal experience has given rise to my	College Experiences	(1)(2)(5)(6)	Typical
			Prodigal	(1)(2)(4)(5)	Typical

		present day God" (1)	experiences (leaving church, but returning)		
			Being Married	(3)(4)(5)(6)	Typical
			Being Black	(1)(5)(6)	Variant
			Age	(1)(2)(3)	Variant
			Job	(6)(8)	Variant
How does the type of Black church (other-worldly vs. this-worldly) influence their God-image?	Church orientation	"Kind of hard to say either/or" (1)	Both – Focus on service and afterlife	(1)(2)(8)	Variant
		"We definitely focus on outreach and helping out in the community" (3)	This-worldly	(3)(4)	Variant
		"This life is temporary and life in heaven will be eternal" (7)	Other-worldly	(5)(6)(7)	Variant
		"Has your church's orientation influenced your image of God?" (question)	Yes – being with God is focus	(2)(6)(7)	Variant
			No	(1)(3)(4)(5)(8)	Typical

How do Racial Identity Attitudes Influence attendance at/choice of a Black Church	Attitudes about what it means to be Black	"Black is Beautiful" (4)	Proud to be Black	(1)(2)(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	General
			Unique Experience	(1)(2)(4)(6)(8)	Typical
		"Have that thing in common" (2)	Rich heritage	(1)(2)(5)(8)	Typical
			Kinship	(1)(2)(5)	Variant
		"Seeing the strengths and weaknesses of our race" (1)	Embodying Stereotypes	(1)(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			Passive	(1)(2)(3)(4)	Typical
			Intolerant	(1)(3)(5)	Variant
			Self-loathing	(3)(6)(7)	Variant
		"Under barbaric conditions, YET and STILL Black people are here" (6)	Survivors	(1)(5)(6)(8)	Typical
			Have made contributions to America	(1)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
		"Your accomplishments are marginalized" (6)	Have to prove yourself	(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			Thought of negatively by others	(1)(6)(7)	Variant
	Opinions about the Black Church	"So much about me and I learned about myself culturally comes from the Black Church" (6)	Importance of home church	(2)(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			Culture	(1)(2)(5)(6)	Typical
			It is an identity	(1)(2)(6)	Variant
			Empowerment	(2)(6)(7)	Variant
			Training for Life	(2)(5)(6)	Variant

		"Nowhere else is it ok to express yourself so wildly and freely" (1)	Singing	(1)(2)(3)(5)(7)	Typical
			Expressiveness	(1)(2)(5)(7)	Typical
			Call and response	(1)(2)(5)(6)	Typical
			Preaching	(1)(5)(7)	Variant
			Worship	(5)(8)	Variant
		"sense of togetherness. It's a unit" (1)	Helping others	(4)(5)(6)(8)	Typical
			Defines Family	(4)(6)	Variant
			Being around Black people	(1)(2)(5)	Variant
		"The Black Church is not genuine" (3)	People in church can be challenging	(3)(5)	Variant
			Used as a crutch	(3)(4)	Variant
How do Racial Identity Attitudes influence African Americans' God-image?	African American Image of God	"I can't say that [Racial Identity attitudes] has" (2)	Has not influenced	(2)(3)(4)(6)(7)	Typical
		"How I think of Black People, I just automatically think of God being there for Black people" (5)	God has been cornerstone	(1)(5)(8)	Variant

In general, participants revealed that their Image of God was a male/father-figure. Participants generally perceived God as being omnipotent and consuming/all-encompassing. Most participants' reported a childhood churchgoing foundation and their family as having influenced their image of God. In addition, most participants revealed that they were proud to be Black. Even participants over 50 years old whose mean score was lower on centrality scale of the MIBI reported pride in being Black.

At least half of the participants did not see an actual image of God; these participants reported seeing a light. At least half of the participants were able to see God in a human form, either as a human being or having the silhouette of a human being. Participants typically thought of God as a Higher Being/Power and perceived God as being dependable and compassionate. Participants typically shared a belief of God that they had to live right. In addition, participants typically wondered if they would get into heaven. Participants also typically believed in the providence of God in their lives and that God identified with the struggle of Black Americans.

Participants typically perceived both their parents as loving and invested in their developing personhood. Additionally, participants typically attributed a childhood churchgoing foundation, the bible, regular church attendance, college experiences, experiences leaving the church and then returning, and being married, as having influenced their image of God. At least half of the participants did not believe that their church's orientation influenced their image of God. Typically, participants perceived the Black experience as being unique, Blacks as having a rich heritage, Blacks as being passive, Blacks as embodying stereotypes, Blacks as survivors, Blacks as having to prove themselves as Americans, and Blacks as having made contributions to America. At least

half of the participants revealed that their home church was important and that the Black Church had a culture that is foundational. Typically, participants revealed that they enjoyed the singing, expressiveness, and the helping out of other people that one experiences in the Black Church. Finally, participants typically did not believe that their opinions about what it means to be Black influenced their Image of God.

Overall, participants were more expansive in their responses about their racial identity attitudes than they were about their Image of God. Stylistically, this could be because the Image of God questions were asked first, when participants were more nervous and reserved, while questions about being Black came later, when participants were more relaxed and better able to elaborate their responses. Interestingly, this study did not yield a large number of "general" cases, perhaps speaking to the unique characteristics of the group and the deeply hidden, convoluted beliefs and opinions that participants have about God and what it means to be Black.

Domains, Core Ideas, and Categories

Example statements from general, typical, and variant categories of each domain are included.

Imagery

The domain "Imagery" was assigned to the actual image participants received when they were given a prompt to get an image of God that could be drawn.

"**Not an actual image" Participant 2.** Participants who described their physical Image more abstractly fell under the core idea of not seeing an actual image.

Light. Typically, participants saw a light when they envisioned God. Of his actual Image of God, Participant 1 said, "I'm seeing light. I can see myself or I feel myself as I'm looking up and see light. I—it's not blinding, but it's very very bright. A beam, or a direct direct light that's shinning. That's what I see." Participant 4 called his image a "white, white light." Participant 6 described what she saw as "what I could best describe as the best that my mind could do to describe heaven. I see a throne. I see radiant light… I see lots of light in my imagination." Participant 6 continued:

> I know what a tree looks like. I know what you—a person looks like, I know what a view looks like or a dog or a house, whatever. Those are things that are very tangible. But, God is very intangible. I feel His presence. I believe in His presence and His existence. Um, but I can't draw him. You know, *laughs.* I can't sketch a picture of Him.

"We are made in His image" Participant 7. Participants who saw a physical image of God were able to explain what God looked like relative to a human being.

Male/father-figure. In general, participants spoke of God and identified God as a male and as a father-figure. When asked if God could be a woman, Participant 7 said "the bible says He was a he." Participant 2 also answered that her God was a man. Although Participant 6 responded "man, God is bigger than some human-inscribed gender role," she referred to God as "He" and "Abba Father" throughout the interview. Participant 1 said, "Being…raised in the church and always hearing that God is a "He" or given the masculine pronoun, does kinda shape—when I talk about God, it does make me say "He." I—I'm more apt to say "He." But then…God—I don't know that I would even give Him a sex."

Has a human form. Typically, participants were able to vision God as having some physical characteristics of a human being. Participant 7 said, "the bible, what I believe in, says we are made after His image, so he'll have to have a head, arms, you know, because man was made in His image." When first asked the question about his Image of God, Participant 4 explained that he didn't see an actual being. Later in the interview, when asked a follow-up question about the gender of God, whom Participant 4 had been referring to as "He," Participant 4 explained, "I try to always think to myself, you know, all we know is that we're shaped in His image. So. It could be he or her because we're all human, you know."

Projected Image. Three participants revealed a clear projection between the Image they had of God and themselves. For example, Participant 3, a woman who owns her own business and identifies that she likes to help others and that she is "always trying to make life better for others. Pretty much before my family. So, I guess denying myself for others." When asked about her Image of God, Participant 3 said, "I see the picture that you see everywhere. Tall, slim, long hair. Kind of..sad face. Yeah. Kind of sad face." According to Participant 3, the face was sad because of burden and concern for the world. Participant 8, a handyman, described his Image of God as being "busy hands. Hands that look busy. And protecting. And Confident. And securing…individuals. I would look at it as a pair of hands." Of himself, Participant 8 revealed, "Well, in a general sense, you know, you look at your family, you try to make sure of their well-being. Try to make sure they are protected. You try to make sure that they aren't in harms way and anything that you can possibly do to, to advise them to keep out of harms way, you do so." Participant 5, who also had the highest centrality mean score (M = 6.25), had an Image of God that

was a Black man. When asked about an Image of God that she could draw, Participant 5 said, "The first thing that came to my mind was a black male… like a father figure…um…and…and yeah…and that's kind of—kind of what I see. Um, just a—a father figure." Participant 5 went on to elaborate, "the Black male of course…um, in terms of physical features would probably I guess resemble somewhat of my father."

White when younger. Three participants revealed that when they were younger, the Image of God they had was of a White man. According to Participant 2, "when I was REALLY young and first started going to church, the image—my image of God or what I thought God looked like was white skin, blue eyes, blond hair. And then as I start to read the bible myself and start to get an image of what the bible says God looks like, that image changed." Toward the end of the interview Participant 5 added, "every time I see a White picture of God, I always think um…I mean, there was nobody in the middle east that was that pure white. *Laughs.* That always amazed—but I didn't think that probably ten years ago, probably thought that as after I started teaching." Linking his personal experience with that of other African Americans in the Black Church, Participant 1 explained:

> I still think that there's this attempt to overcome this foundation that God is White or that God—this picture that we have of Jesus with a White face and this long flowing hair. I think that still rests in the back of our heads. Whether or not in the front of our heads, we do see Christ, the imagery that's presented of God, or of Jesus, of Christ, oftentimes isn't enough, you don't see enough of it where it is of a bronze skin or to the point where it makes it your initial thought. I think that, for me, that does rest in the back of my head. This figure that's White, that's not Black.

Cognitions

The domain "Cognitions" was assigned to what participants said they thought when they heard the word God.

"A greater more powerful being" Participant 6. Participants who thought of God as being an entity outside of themselves or as a Being with powers beyond that of a human fell under this core idea.

Higher power/being. Typically, participants thought of God as being a higher power/being. Participant 7 revealed that he thought of God as a "supreme being." Participant 4 described his thoughts of God as a "Higher Being…Higher Being and the father of all beings." Participant 2 thought of a "Higher Power" when she heard the word God.

Spirit. Three participants thought of God as being a spirit. Participant 8 said, "Well, now, you know, God is actually a spirit." Participant 5 said that she thought of "the spirit that…that—that guides me through—through life." Participant 7 said, "God, He's everywhere. Everywhere you can see. I can't, I can't, uh depict what He looks like because He's a spirit, He's everywhere. But, yet, we—we, it said we're made in His image, so…something beyond me."

Creator. Three participants thought of God as being the Creator. Participant 1 said, "everyone has that source—that direct—that in His creation or Him creating me, or in my purpose…I know that I am a creation of His and that every creation has a purpose

and has being because He made it so." Participant 7 thought of God as the "creator of the universe."

Feelings

The domain "Feelings" was assigned to what participants said they felt when they heard the word God.

"Kind of fearful" (Participant 3). Participants who felt fear when they heard the word God fell under this core idea.

Want to please Him. Three participants expressed a desire to please God, which ignited a fear in them. Participant 4 said, "What do I feel? Um…Honestly it makes me want to straighten up. To live right, yeah…I just think am I doing what's right? Am I in my right place in life, yeah. Um…am I fulfilling everything that He wants of me." Participant 5 revealed, "I think one thing also is that I fear God. And…and I guess…um, yeah I guess like a parent care about how He thinks of me." Participant 3 explained, "I want to know that I'm living to please Him and that I'm doing everything that I can to please Him and if by the way that I'm living, when I die, am I going to heaven."

"A calming presence to me" (Participant 6). Participants who felt a sense of calming when they heard the word God fell under this core idea.

Peaceful. Three participants expressed that they felt peaceful when they heard the word God. Participant 2, for example, said "I feel peaceful." Participant 6 explained: "I really seize comfort, security, peace, um, settling" when she spoke of her relationship

with God. Participant 4 said that he felt "peaceful, rest, relax, exhale…yeah. Yeah. Its peace" when he heard the word God.

Content. Two participants expressed that they felt happiness or joyful when they heard the word God. For example, Participant 7 said, "I feel great….I feel happy." Participant 2 said, "I feel joyful."

Secure. Three participants said that they felt secure when they heard the word God. Participant 8 said "I feel the presence of a…an enactment of confidence, security, and…basically the security part mostly." Participant 6 explained:

> The fact that I do believe in the existence of a God lets me know that there are things that are outside of my control, which, in a way, is secure—is relieving. It's brings about a sense of security in thinking I don't have to be in control of everything because there is a greater, more powerful being that is in control of everything, including me.

"Honored to be in His presence" (Participant 5). Participants who felt humility when they heard the word God fell under this core idea.

Humble. Two participants said that they felt humble when they heard the word God. Participant 4 used the word humble to explain his feelings about God. Participant 5 said, "it's just an overwhelming feeling of—of being blessed and being honored to be in His presence."

Characteristics of God

The domain "Characteristics of God" was assigned to participants' perceptions of God's characteristics or the features of God.

"Able to do things normal mortals can't do" (Participant 2). Participants who expressed that God had power and influence outside of anything men could do fell under this core idea.

Omnipotent. In general, participants described God as being all-powerful. Participant 3 described it as "Someone that can…just see you through. Just a—to me an all and all, pretty much...If you're going through something, I feel like that you can go to God when you can't go to anybody else and I feel like that going to Him you can get results...by going to him." Participant 2 explained, "what I know about God or what I feel that I know about God is that He has so much power." Participant 6 described God as being powerful and being in control of everything.

Consuming/all-encompassing. In general, participants thought of God as being this all-encompassing and consuming presence. Participant 5 described God as an overwhelming feeling. Participant 1 described his Image of God as being a light and revealed that the characteristics of this light were that "it's covering and it's pervasive and it's all around. But, yet—yet and still it's very direct as well. And, it's almost as if I am visualizing that it's coming from a source that's unknown, that I really can't see because all I can see is the light. But, I can see that it's illuminating what's around me, what's beside me and everything in that's in my surrounding." When asked about the characteristics of the hands that he saw as being an Image of God, Participant 8 called it, "It would be to the degree that the hands alone would not just generate around one person, but an entire world of people."

"**Someone that can just see you through" (Participant 3).** Participants who revealed that God was consistent and had the participant's best interest at heart fell under this core idea.

Dependable. Typically, participants described God as being a dependable resource. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 6 called God dependable when asked to describe God.

Knowledgeable. Three participants described God as having knowledge beyond what humans have. Participant 2 called God "all-knowing." Additionally, Participant 6 explained, "You know, as a child, as a little girl, I could run to my dad and get a sense of comfort and security from him because he was so much bigger than I was and he knew so much more than I did as a kid. And, I think a lot of times, I think about my relationship with God the same way."

"I think of Him as being caring" (Participant 5). Participants who explained that they perceived God as being empathic and comforting fell under this core idea.

Compassionate. Typically, participants described God as being forgiving, understanding, and caring, labeled here as God being compassionate. Participant 5 said, "I think that He is understanding. That He is…forgiving." Participant 7 described God as being merciful. Participant 6 explained, "I think of Him as being caring, loving, compassionate."

Loving. Three participants used the word loving when describing God. For example, Participant 6 called God loving in the above quote. Participants 5 and 7 also called God loving.

Soothing. Three participants referred to God as a soothing, calming, and settling presence. Participant 1 described, "If I had to…describe in a word, I would say Good. I think there is an overall Good in everyone. And I think that's—and Good, not in the sense of Good and bad, but just that it's—it's Good. But, not that it's in contrast to bad, though. But, I embody that. There is something that is just life within me that comes from the source." Participant 4 said that his characteristics of God were "peace—peaceful, rest, relax, exhale."

Beliefs about God

The domain "Beliefs about God" was assigned to what participants said they believed about God.

"Am I doing everything I can to please Him?" (Participant 3). Participants who revealed that they believed God was judging their behaviors fell under this core idea.

Have to live right. Typically, participants believed that to please God, they had to live right. Participant 5 for example said, "even though I may have felt like God was not pleased, um, with maybe my actions or if I felt that God had a lesson for me to learn through a mistake um…realizing that by being blessed afterward or…by…something happening to let me know that God is still with me." Participant 3 said, "I want to know that I'm living to please Him and that I'm doing everything that I can to please Him." Participant 4 said "it makes me want to straighten up. To live right, yeah..I just think am I doing what's right? Am I in my right place in life, yeah. Um…am I fulfilling everything that He wants of me."

Heaven litmus test (will I go to heaven)? Typically, participants mentioned entrance into to Heaven as a litmus test of living a life that was pleasing to God. Participant 2 revealed that she questioned "if by the way that I'm living, when I die, am I going to heaven? You know, have I lived good enough to go to heaven." Participant 2 said, "God will reward you in heaven for the things that you do on earth." Participant 6 said, "You know, the hope for Christians is that one day you get to heaven to a place where there's no more suffering, there's no more pain, there's no more sickness, there's no more crying. You know, where things are right, everything comes back to perfect order, the perfect wholeness how God intended it before the fall." Participant 8 revealed, "When you get to heaven, you know, you ain't got to worry about that much no way if you make it in."

Put others first. Two participants explained that they put others first in attempts to please God. Participant 3 described it as "always trying to make life better for others. Pretty much before my family. So, I guess denying myself for others." Participant 8 described it as "I mean, you can't help but be a care-giver if you have—in the spirit of God. God blesses you in accordance to how you bless others."

"He has good things out for me" Participants who believed God was benevolently guiding their lives fell under this core idea.

Providence. Typically, participants believed that God had a special plan or role in their lives, that things were destined for them. Participant 8 explained:

> I was ambushed one night in a patrol car, I had the window down in a patrol car…And, all of the rounds that hit the patrol car was on the left-hand—I was in the driver's seat. Everyone of the rounds hit the driver's door. But none of the

> rounds penetrated. One went across the steering column, and all around, all around, any part of my body could have been struck but not one round touched me. And, I often think, you know, people have described to me, you know you're mighty lucky. And, I often think about that, the caliber of gun it was and the number of rounds that was fired, it wasn't luck…it was that spirit-being that I trust in that kept me to this day. And, uh, you ask me, I probably would tell you, probably or more rounds—I know it was at least 15 rounds or more shot in that door directly at me, point blank range…so, I didn't get out and say I was lucky. I got out and said I was blessed.

Participant 6 recalled how she was hired on her job:

> I was really praying one day just out to God, I was "eh" and I really felt the Lord was like "I want you to go back to school. I'm gonna open a way for that to happen to you. And I'm kind of like, "ok." A couple of weeks later, I found out about this job. Alright, I'll throw my name in the hat. Here is the resume, give you some writing samples, get in touch with some people. I get called called in for an interview. Wow, ok. The interviewer goes, 154 people have applied and, you know, I get the job. To me, I was like "wow Lord, that's you really making a way. You putting me in a place to do what you told me that you have for me to do. I couldn't create that, you know? That was the divine, powerful hand of God moving in my life, moving in a situation to put me in a place like this.

Participant 7 described his belief as "I'm 53, that's because of God, because He breathes, my heart pumps because of Him. Male, because He made me a male. I have a job, I have an education all because of Him. Everything comes from God."

"God had a special place for Black people" (Participant 8). Participants who believed God's presence has been with Black people fell under this core idea.

Identifies with the struggle of Blacks. Typically, participants recalled the sociohistoric struggle of African Americans and identified an affinity between their suffering and God's divine protection.

Participant 6 explained:

> People who had every, every obstacle, every roadblock possible thrown at us, you can't vote, you can't go to school, you can't learn how to read, you can't be free, you can't chose who you marry, you can't go with your family wherever they go, we're gonna sell them up north and you're gonna stay down south or vice versa. We're gonna rip you from your homeland, ship you across the sea totally against your will, beat you, you know, under these barbaric conditions, yet and still, YET AND STILL, Black people are still here. We overcame. And, that's just kind of what I think about. I want us to embrace that spirit, that—what we have been able to accomplish to me, in my mind, by the grace of God.

Participant 5 explained, "when I think about, I guess, the past of Black people and…I guess how I think of Black people, I just automatically think of God being there with Black people. Not that He's not there with other people, but that, I mean, truly, I don't know, I guess God—think that God has brought us where we are." Participant 8 said, "you know, when you look back at the pain and suffering that our race have been through, I think God said, 'Imma have these people to be a testimony of what I can do.' You get me?"

"[Dependent] on the context where God is presented" (Participant 1).

Participants who explained that their belief about God could be altered based on the context of God's presentation fell under this core idea.

Distant God. Two participants talked about believing God was distant from them, especially when younger. Participant 1 explained, "sometimes as He's presented in a way that's very damning or in a way that's…confusing or in a way that I don't understand or in a way that I don't feel is my experience, or a God that's very distant from me."

Participant 6 also explained:

> Growing up, I viewed God as this benevolent…wise being that was kind of distant. You know, because of those—"oh, great heavenly father on high. We beseech you now." Very King James version *laughs* of the bible. It's kind of like "Oh, He's over there and He cares, but He's over there." Um, because so much—so much of it was just "Lord, we're just waiting, we're just waiting for the day. We're just casting our burdens on you…when you come" which made Him seem very…loving, caring, powerful, but kinda distant. Kinda over there.

"It's got to be in you" (Participant 8). Participants who believed that God had to be integrated into one's personhood fell under this core idea.

Internal. Three participants explained that they believed one must carry God or the metaphor of the church inside of them. Participant 5 said "you know, the church truly is what's inside of us." Participant 8 revealed, "in a general sense, you've got to build that church in your heart before you even go to that other building, you know."

Descriptions of Parents

The domain "Descriptions of parents" was assigned to the characteristics of God that they could identify in their parents.

"I can see them showing those characteristics in different ways" (Participant 1). Participants who expressed that only one parent shared characteristics with God fell under this core idea.

Mom nurturing. Two participants described their mothers as being nurturing and reflecting a characteristic of God. "My mother is the God of the New Testament in the

sense that she's very loving, very nurturing, very forgiving." Participant 6 described her mother as a nurturer.

Mom positive energy. Three participants described their mother's as being a source of positive energy and inspiration for them. Participant 2 said, "Well, I grew up with my mom and my mom to me is a powerful figure, powerful person. She is very strong, so those are some of the characteristics that I see in my mom that I also see in God." Participant 6 described her mother as an encourager:

> My mom is an encourager. And, so I can kind of—the same way where I can talk to my mom and my mom says, "You can do it. I believe in you, you are able to do this." You know, "You can do it." You know, the same way, when I read scriptures that are encouraging to me, it's like I sense God there saying, "You can do this. I've got you. I've got your back. You can do this. I'm giving you the ability to do this. Go. Do. Succeed.

Participant 8 described his mother as constantly reminding him about God, something he treasures now, when he said "my mother was a strict church-going person. Wanted us to be familiar with God and church."

Dad more distant. Two participants described their fathers as being more distant thus making it more difficult for them to link positive or overt characteristics between their fathers and God. Participant 1 explained, "I would say my father is the God of the Old Testament. My father tends to be a little bit more—he's easier to become angry. Just that God that's presented. I could see the jealous trait more so with my dad. The wrath, those characteristics." Participant 8 described his father in more reserved terms. "Well, pop didn't talk about God a whole lot…My—my dad was real quiet about, you know

issues and things. He was not a forerunner as far as speaking out. He was real humble and quiet in his own way."

Dad positive characteristics very influential. Two participants revealed that their fathers were very influential in them formulating positive images of God. Participant 5 explained that her father having high-expectations of her was translated onto God, with God having high expectations of her, and Participant 5 having high expectations of herself. Participant 6 described her father as extremely influential:

> You know, sometimes people in the church, especially Christian church which I am assuming we're talking about here in your study, if they had a bad dad or an absent, you know, and they get to the thought of God as the Abba Father, they have a really hard time with that because their dad was a jerk and they have nothing *laughs* that they can compare it to. I had a really great dad. Have a really great dad, um, so I don't really—I don't have an issue. It, it helped—my dad being so great and so loving and so kind and patient with me, helped me when I envision God as my heavenly father, because I can, I can kind of transfer those good feelings that I have about my earthly father to my heavenly father without there being a stretch or a jump or something like that.

"Both of them" (Participant 4). Participants who expressed that both parents shared characteristics with God fell under this core idea.

Loving. Typically, participants described both parents as being loving, which was a characteristic that both parents shared with God. Participants 4, 5, 6, and 7 all used the word loving to describe both parents.

A good resource. Typically, participants saw both parents as good resources for support, strength, and encouragement. Participant 3 said that both her parents were "Dependable…trustworthy…always there. Always there." Participant 4 said, "as far as being understanding and um…forgiving…and…I know they love me." Participant 5

described her parents as "I think as time has passed and as I have, you know, gotten older, I think that the understanding, the love, [forgiving]…I think that those things seem to be characteristics of my parents now at an older age."

Invested in development. Typically, participants described their parents as being an integral component of their development. Participant 6 described growing up with parents who took her to church and encouraged her to participate in programs:

> There was somebody in my church who taught me how to *laughs* how to eat at a banquet. She took me to this banquet for the Woman's Baptist Home and Farm Missionary Convention of North Carolina where they had chicken and green beans for every thang. Oh Lord. And she would tell me to come, it's gonna be a good experience. My mom would send me on with her to all these different things.

Participant 8 explained an instance when he was fired from a job in law enforcement:

> Now here you are, you've been working all your life and I want to say your employment comes to an abrupt stop for no reason all. You got every reason because you have put in all these years and all of a sudden because of somebody else's opinion, that, you know, your job is away. And, then you look at it and say, well what am I gonna do? And then, you have a mother to look at you and say, hey—you know, you say, "hey mom, I lost my job." She looks at you and says "well, thank God." So, you think about it, why is she saying thank God because I lost my job? Well then, that state—that statement that she made couldn't…quite…grow on you right then…. [Now] I know that, if you continue to look towards the hills—we emphasize those hills because we know God got cattle on a thousand hills, so we look towards Him all the time. Not that we got a thousand cattle, but we know He's able to provide for us with whatever we're in need of.

Forgiving. Three participants used the word forgiving to describe both parents.

Description of Self

The domain "Descriptions of self" was assigned to the characteristics of God that participants could identity in themselves.

"I try to model myself to an extent as much as I can" (Participant 4). Participants who saw similarities in their characteristics and the characteristics of God spoke of their characteristics in ideal terms. For that reason, they fell under this core idea of an ideal personal self.

Dependable. Three participants used the word dependable to describe themselves. For example, Participant 2 explained, "I try to be a strong person. I also try to be someone that people can depend on. I think that, you know, people do depend on God, or, you know, pray. And, do things to show that they depend on God and seek answers. So, I try to be a strong person as well, someone that people can depend on."

Caring for others. Three participants talked about caring for others. Participant 3 spoke of putting others before herself. Participant 4 explained it as, "you know the bible says God loves you, He forgives you…He understands you. And, sometimes, I think to myself, is that something that—it's something I feel that I do a lot. You know, I always consider other people, I think."

Peaceful. Two participants used the word peaceful to describe themselves and saw this trait in God.

Influences on Image of God

The domain "Influences on Image of God" was assigned to events, circumstances, and behaviors that participants perceived as having influenced their Image of God,

"I grew up in a very religious family" (Participant 2). Participants who revealed a childhood shaped by God and church fell under this core idea.

Family. In general, participants labeled their family as having been influential on their Image of God. Participant 2 explained:

> I grew up, you know, in a very religious family. I went to Sunday School most Sundays when I was younger. Spent summers at Vacation Bible School and as I said, my grandfather is a minister. So, I started out younger, you know, basically grew up in church. And so, you know, I had that family influence. My granddad and my grandma always got me up and took me to Sunday School and even Sundays that my mom didn't go to church, I still went.

Participant 4 described his parents as "teaching me the ways of God." Participant 6 said, "you know, I visit my in-laws, it's not even a question. If we're there on Sunday, we're gonna go to church with them. Like, it's so centered around that. That, of course, informed and continues to inform my image of God." Participant 8 said that his family influenced his Image of God. Participant 8 recalled, "when you're tight-knitted to a, a family that trust and believe in God, have taught the emphasis of what God can do, is able to do, you gotta start growing and understanding, you know, that there is somebody else out there beside you."

Childhood churchgoing foundation. In general, participants recalled having to go to church from a young age. In the above category (i.e., **Family**), Participant 2

explained about her grandparents taking to church when she was younger. Participant 5 said, "we had to go to church. We sat on the front pew with [her father] and we would all be sleep and I mean, but, we were there." Participant 4 said "my whole church experience has influenced my view, my image of God." Participant 6 describes it as:

> I was raised in the church knee high to a cricket, I was there on Sundays, on Wednesdays, for vacation bible school. My dad is a deacon. My mom is a Sunday school teacher, in the choir, everybody in my community went to somebody's church, we went to other people's churches for revival, or going to other people's churches for vacation bible school and I went to visit my grandmother, it was going to them—church is a part of my family.

"I'm going to go to church at least 3 times a month, if not 4" (Participant 4). Participants who talked about their religious behaviors and preferences as influencing their Image of God fell under this core idea.

Bible. Typically, participants talked about the bible as having influenced their Image of God. Participant 7 said that the bible influenced his Image of God. Participants 6 and 8 quoted scriptures during the interview. Participant 6 said, "What influenced my image of God the most?…I guess…simple answer but things like reading the bible." Participant 2 talked of a shifting in her Image of God when she started to read the bible for herself: "When I was REALLY young and first started going to church, the image—my image of God or what I thought God looked like was white skin, blue eyes, blond hair. And then as I start to read the bible myself and start to get an image of what the bible says God looks like, that image changed."

Regular church attendance. Typically, participants talked about regular church attendance as having influenced their Image of God. Participant 2 talked about her

experience having moved from a rural area to a more urban area and how this influenced her Image of God: "Frequency of church attendance. I was—I did attend church more before I moved. Since I've been here, I've been trying to get back in the groove of going on a regular basis. But, I do think those things affect the way I think about God and the way I think about church." Participant 8 revealed that he attends church at least twice a week. Participant 6 shared that her experience in church as a worship leader keeps her in the church and shapes her Image of God. "I'm a worship leader at my church so me personally worshipping, but also leading other people to worship, you know, my role is not to evoke a response in them. My goal is to…create an atmosphere where they can commune with God and have their own response to Him"

Pastor/word. Three participants emphasized the importance of their pastor and his or her sermons on influencing their Image of God. For example, Participant 7 said:

> My pastor, he comes well-prepared. He jumps and hollers, I say, "hey. Jump and holler. You told some things. I'm reading and I'm sitting here thinking and you know, if you want to jump up and kick," Cause we're Baptist and he grew up in a Pentacostal. He—he runs and he throws his gown and they don't like that. One of the deaconesses says, "We pay you to stay in the pulpit. All this jumping," but it's fine with me. I'll get up there and jump with him because he has told me something. He didn't sit just sit there and holler "this Jesus" and then holler "this man told me." He starts off with the text, you know, things like that.

"My own personal experience has given rise to my present day God" (Participant 1). Participants who talked about their personal experiences and how these were formative in shaping their Image of God fell under this core idea.

College experiences. Typically, participants talked about experiences in college as having shaped their Image of God.

Participant 1 said:

> My experience in college really broadened my mind to seeing different experiences of God. Seeing different experiences of spirituality…I encountered—because in my neighborhood, everyone was pretty much Protestant Baptist. We all usually went to the same church or to neighboring churches in the same community. There weren't a lot of differing faiths. But when I got to college, there were people of all different ethnic backgrounds. From all over the country, all over the world who believed different things. And, just as much as I believed or had faith in my God, they had the same faith in a God that was totally different. So, it made me—it began to cause me to question.

Participant 6 gave an anecdotal story about attending a conference while in college and this having forever changed her Image of God:

> I went to a conference when I was in college, where it was—it was put on by this church with a greater—bigger ministry. And, um, I was late one day and I had to sit up in the balcony, it was at this large auditorium and I remember looking out and I saw White people and I saw Black people, and I saw mixed people and biracial people, I saw Asian people and Latinos and everybody and they were all worshipping God together. And, it dawned on me in that moment, I said, this is what heaven looks like. Heaven is not necessarily the Black Amen corner over here and then the Episcopalian, probably you know mainstream majority White, you know, over here. I grew up in a Black Baptist Church. To me, anything Episcopalian or Catholic was White…It was—to me, at that moment at that conference I started thinking this is, this is what heaven looks like. Heaven looks like the world.

Participant 2 also mentioned her college experience as influencing her Image of God as it showed her "some of things [to] see about people's religion."

Prodigal experiences (leaving church but returning). Typically, participants gave anecdotal stories of leaving the church and then returning. The experience of leaving the church and returning influenced their Image of God.

Participant 4 said:

> After I graduated from college and was out of college for a couple of years…and I started—I guess after I really got into the world. Um, out on my own, pay my own bills, make my own money, things like that. I think that's when, after I experienced all of the life away from God and I started going to church more and everything, it gradually started to change. And, I think that comes from me just understanding a little more of what it means to believe in God. Um, try to live right.

Participant 2 described her experience as "you know, you go through those teenage, early 20 years when you're kind of rebelling. And so that was my thing. I was like, 'well, I'll go to church but I don't have to go. Like, you can't make me go.' And then, as I've gotten older, just kinda getting back into, you know, going again on a regular basis." Participant 5 expressed that "going away to college and having different types of experiences whether those experiences were not pleasing in the eyes of God or whether those experiences were pleasing in the eyes of God," shaped her Image of God.

Being married. Typically, participants revealed that being married influenced their Image of God. Participant 3 said of her marriage, "it keeps me grounded." Participant 6 said:

> The bible describes God as, you know, the…the husband, the bridegroom coming back for his bride, the church. Well, that takes on a whole new meaning when I become someone's bride. And, just kind of understand the kind of preparation that takes part on both sides of that equation for a big moment, for a wedding. Uh…you know, the ways where—like in Ephesians where the bible says that Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus , says, um…wives submit to your husbands, husbands—as your husbands submit them to God, you know, informs—gives me another understanding. Being married—like being single, you can read that and be like "that's nice. Um.…that doesn't apply to me." Um, but it does apply to you in a different way. You think about it in a different way, you process in a different way—I did when I got married because all of a sudden, it took on a new…very tangible meaning in my life.

Participant 5 said, "I actually think that being married has influenced my image of God. Um, because before, maybe like some things that I did, or, yes. Well, I guess maybe not so much that it influenced my image of God, but it help me to…worship Him more… that I could be at a place of peace at one part of my life."

Being Black. Three participants talked about how Being Black influenced their Image of God. Participant 1 explained:

> We in the Black Church are very expressive. But actually…our expression it's very, very angry. It's very mournful. And I think that relates a lot to the Black experience. And even though, for instance…someone of another race may experience God, I don't think it's…as…hard…or as angry. I think that in the Black Church, overall, I don't think I'll be making an overstatement that if—there's a sense of this damning God. This very…strict God. This very….you know…*chuckles*…this very *is making chopping motions with his hands* like, this and that…But, in other churches or multicultural churches, mainstream churches, I think there's this God of prosperity, this God of love, this God of…that's more…there's just a more loving God… and I think it has to do with our Black experience.

In explaining her Image of God as a Black man, Participant 5 said, "I think that a part of me thinking of God as being a Black male, the Black probably just comes with militants and *laughs* the male probably just comes with what you read in the bible."

Age. Three participants mentioned that their Image of God had changed as they got older.

Job. Two participants mentioned their job as influencing their Image of God. Participant 6 explained an anecdotal account of how she was hired in her job. Participant

8 spoke of a near-death experience that happened on his job. Both of these experiences influenced their Image of God.

Church Orientation

The domain "Church orientation" was assigned to participants' responses about their perception of their church's orientation (this-worldly vs. other-worldly). In general, churches that have an other-worldly orientation tend to be churches that emphasize the universality of Christian suffering (Lincoln, 2003) and the idea that a heavenly reward will compensate for injustices suffered while on earth (Martin, 2001). This-worldly churches focus on the unique pride and privilege of being an African American and the need to eliminate tensions that are happening in the adjacent community and larger society.

"Kind of hard to say either/or" (Participant 1). Participants who expressed that their church combined attitudes from both orientations fell under this core idea.

Both – focus on service and afterlife. Three participants explained that their church was a mixture of both a this-worldly and other-worldly orientation, exemplified by Participant 2. "I would honestly say that I think it's a good mixture of the two. And by that I mean that by focusing on what's going on in the community and in larger society, we are preparing ourselves for what's to come."

"We definitely focus on outreach and helping out in the community" (Participant 3). Participants who revealed that their church was more involved in earthly outreach and missionary affairs fell under this core idea.

This-worldly. Two participants explained that their church's orientation was this worldly, exemplified by Participant 4:

> I want to say this world…um type church because I think—I think that the idea with me is kind of…um…influenced by how I am. And what I mean by this is, when I go to church, I tend to be…directed or, I—I talk more, deal with more of the people in church that want to go out and do things or listen to people in the community who need help and, you know, want to do this to the community I think, I feel more my church is one of those churches that, how did you say it? In the world?

"This life is temporary and life in heaven will be eternal" (Participant 7).

Participants who revealed that their church was more focused on making it into heaven to be with God and escaping this world fell under this core idea.

Other-worldly. Three participants explained that their church's orientation was other-worldly exemplified by Participant 6:

> I would probably describe my home church as other-worldly… because—I'm sitting here trying to think. I don't know of any…really anything that we did that was—like even the missionary circles, the old school missionary circles would be let's take fruit baskets to the sick and shut in. Which were people who by and large were members of the church. They were just elderly and not able to get out any more and not wanting them to feel abandoned because of their current physical situation. People would make sure that somebody went by to visit them. Um…but it wasn't missionary, as missionary focused, um…and it wasn't as let's go affect change, be the change that we want to see, be a Jesus to the community, you know, kind of thing. You know, are you poor are you impoverished, ok let us help you. Because, you know, uh…we're being the change.

"Has your church's orientation influenced your Image of God?" (question).

Participant responses to this question fell under this core idea.

Yes – being with God is focus. Three participants explained that their church's orientation had influenced their Image of God. Participant 2, whose church was a mixture of both said:

> I think it has. In saying that—and by saying that, I guess I mean that…it has changed, well not necessarily changed, but I guess enhanced my view of the fact that God will reward you in heaven for the things that you do on earth. You know, so again, if you're doing the right things, if you're giving back, if you're, you know active in the church but also active in your community, you know, active at your job, you know, if you're doing all these things, you're giving back, you're being, you know, all these good things all these positive things, then it just enhanced my view that you will be rewarded for what you've done on earth.

Participant 7, whose church was other-worldly said, "I know He sent his son to die on the cross that I may have this opportunity. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't—I wouldn't be doing it. I don't want to spend eternity in a place called hell."

No. Typically, participants answered that their church's orientation did not influence their Image of God.

Attitudes about What it Means to be Black

The domain "Attitudes about what it means to be Black" was assigned to participant perceptions of Black Americans and being a Black American.

"Black is beautiful" (Participant 4). Participants who expressed pride with being a Black American fell under this core idea.

Proud to be Black. In general, participants expressed pride in being a Black American. Participant 8 said, "I just—I feel proud, I feel good about being Black. Shoot,

I wouldn't go back for nothing." Participant 7 said, "I'm proud. I'm proud to be Black." Participant 4 explained:

> I think Black is good…like…I don't want to sit here and sound like I am better than a lot of my White counterparts, but, I just think that when you are, as a Black male being educated, a positive role model and doing positive things, I think that makes you elite. Um and…I do, I find myself sometimes when I'm standing around a lot of of my other racial counterparts or whatever, males. I mean, I—I stand with my chest kind of out, because I feel like I'm Black, you know, yeah.

Unique experience. Typically participants spoke of the unique experience of being Black. Participant 2 explained, "to be Black, it means to be…to be different in terms of, you know, the cultural things. But, I guess that's about it. To be different culturally." Participant 1 elaborated:

> There are certain things about our culture and our ability to take, to take in things, but then to give something out that's different, that's our own. Because I'm a hair stylist, I just think about—even though we may do—we may take something that's a mainstream style, but we're gonna make it our own. Our expression is going to be shown in it. We may take Christianity, but we're gonna make it our own expression. We take fashion that may not include us, or it may not have us in mind, that may be more Eurocentric, but we'll take it and make it our own. And, we'll strut with pride and just that sense makes—we'll take English, we'll take literary works, and we'll produce our own. Harlem Renaissance, those things. We'll produce our own. That I love. That I take pride in…just as much as another other race should take pride in the accomplishments that they're race has done. But, I love that.

Participant 6 explained hair as a unique experience among Black Americans. Participant 6 said:

> I want black people to celebrate themselves…when people come to me and they ask me, why did you make the choice that I made to…give up relaxing my hair. Part of it is also the fact that it—my hair was not wrong. I talk to people about that all the time. I'm like, my hair was not wrong and I was like it got to the point where I got tired of feeling like it was wrong and was something that I needed to

> fix...You know, I started getting relaxers when I was a little kid because that's what people did. I remember sitting in the chair on Saturdays with a hot comb and pressing oils, pressing grease getting my hair straightened. Sizzling, burning, feeling it snap, popping and cracking in my ears and smelling your hair burning. And the smell of all that is just something that you had to endure. And, um, I decided in college I didn't have to endure that anymore. I'm so glad that I made that choice.

"Have that thing in common" (Participant 2). Participants who revealed that Blacks share a bond with one another fell under this core idea.

Rich heritage. Typically participants mentioned the rich heritage that African Americans have. Participant 8 said, "You just think about the inspiration and what you went through and the strength that was given to you throughout your culture." Participant 5 said, "I think looking at the struggles of Black people and thinking of, I guess, where God has brought us and how as a people we have depended on God so much and as a people, I'm speaking in general, how a lot of our accomplishments, we give them to God." Using Voodoo as an example, Participant 1 explained:

> What I think about like, voodoo, and uh—just that. It feels very connected to that. Which, voodoo and that being a part of our African heritage. So, there are things that tie back to OUR history, OUR heritage, OUR way of expressing that has transformed and this is the way we express it current-day. We express it in the Christian belief system, but it's no different from the drums and the expression and the dancing that they did with voodoo. I'm using voodoo as an example.

Kinship. Three participants mentioned a kinship with other African Americans. Participant 2 explained that she feels a "kinship with other Black Americans and…yeah, just being able to, you know, identify with others…you know, you have that thing in common. It's like that—you know they'll see you across the room, you know we have that in common you know, just a kinship amongst Black people."

"Seeing the strengths and weakness of our race" (Participant 1). Participants who expressed dismay over within group behaviors and perceptions fell under this core idea.

Embodying stereotypes. Typically, participants spoke about the stereotypes that African Americans embody. Participant 5 talked about the stereotype of Blacks males as disrespectful and Black women as lazy and living off the government:

> It's really…depressing a lot of times to think about the lives of…you know, many of my Black students and, I guess, wondering what their perception of being Black is… I am constantly uplifting them and constantly changing what they say, how they speak to one another, how they disrespect one another. Um, you know, men…my Black males constantly trying to get them to learn what it is to respect a woman, to get them to pull up their pants, to get them to realize that, that there's truly a better life for them. To get them to realize—and, and this caught me by surprise when I see a couple of my students who had already graduated and one of them had a baby. And, I was telling one of them, you know, the ways that that student who had had a baby, what she can do to not live a life of welfare. And, it was like they were amazed just to learn and to know that the possibility was out there for them not to live on welfare and that—because they thought it was an easier life to just get government assistance and that, that—that sacrifice that they would have to make to take that next step of, of independence.

Participant 1 talked about the ghetto and those stereotypes. "I think this generation has taken a few steps backwards at certain times...And then kinda like, the ghetto and all that stuff. The ghetto and those attributes—not attributes, but those…stereotypes, certain stereotypes that are imposed on us. That's the backside of being Black." Participant 4 talked of the importance for him in not being a stereotype:

> I just think in America, you know, just being able to accomplish some things and, and break some trends that's always related to Black males, Black America, the negatives. I guess the…my most important aspect is to… Not being a statistic, um, on the negative end…yeah. I don' t know, I don't know if it's just of lately or what, but I've just been having this feeling of…um…of like…beating the

> odds…again, a lot of guys who I used to hang with, they didn't—it's kind of like they didn't make it. I hate to say they didn't make it because they're still living and going on, but…I just feel a peace, I guess. Um, and…I hate to say it, but I don't feel like I am going through a lot of struggles that's…that's a lot of times related to being a Black, well, a Black male.

Passive. Typically, participants mentioned that Black Americans were not as assertive as other racial groups. When speaking about the Church, Participant 2 said, "I think that Black people sometimes rely too much on what other people tell us as opposed to going back and checking for themselves." Participant 1 said:

> I think that as the Black Community, a lot of that we like to pray about or that we like to…seek divine intervention for things that are just natural, that we have power to deal with. And, I think that our counterparts feel more that way. They feel as though they don't have to pray about these things so fervently because they can take action. They feel liberated to take action. And, that things don't have to be always so divinely inspired.

Intolerant. Three participants mentioned that Black Americans were intolerant of one another. Participant 6 said:

> The fact that I had more problems with other Black people questioning my hair choices than I did from majority White people Caucasians questioning my hair choices. Um, I work in corporate America, corporate settings for the past seven years and never once had a co-worker or employer say anything about my hair and my choice to wear it naturally whether it's locks or in the five years I wore it loose and in afro puffs most days, big large proud afro puffs. Never had anybody say anything. It's always us. It was always Black people who had something to say. Which I always find really interesting…you know sometimes I find you can't win if you do but you can't win if you don't in America. You know, like…if you embrace your Blackness, somebody will have something to say, but I don't feel like I need to divorce my blackness either to fit into some status quo.

When talking about the mindset of people in the Black Church, Participant1 mentioned:

> In my experience, and I know that may just be because of a rural area, but I haven't been to many rural…churches of another culture, of another racial identity. But, I can say that there is a lack of intelligence or information. So, a lot of it does hold fast to the God that was presented probably decades ago. And, I think that because the information…that's more in more metropolitan areas where you have people that are…more scholarly, that have information beyond their own interpretation of the bible, but also have a wealth of knowledge, I think because the Black Church has been somewhat…stagnant…in their—they haven't progressed as fast.

Self-loathing. Three participants mentioned that Black Americans might loathe themselves. When speaking of the difference between the White people in the church that she used to attend and the Black people in the church that she attends now, Participant 3 said that the White people "seemed to really be what a Christian is supposed to be. To have the true love of God. There wasn't a lot of backbiting and talking about people behind their back. In my opinion, the Black Church is not genuine." Participant 7 said:

> I think my cousin told me a long time ago, "you know Blacks, we have a hard time doing things and understanding things" you know. And I said, "why would you think that," you know? You've got a President that you know that's very smart and does well. And, of course he said, "well you know, his mother's White, so he has White genes. He's great." No, I don't—I don't think that.

"Under barbaric conditions YET and STILL Black people are here" (Participant 6). Participants who lauded African American achievements given the history of slavery fell under this core idea.

Survivors. Typically, participants saw Black Americans as having survived.

Participant 8 said:

> I looked back and saw all of the contributions that Blacks have made to society, how they were able to survive with little or nothing, how, uh, when we were given neck bones and the worst part of the meat and we made a meal out of them. Wherein that they wouldn't eat chitterlings, but we cook them things up and all that, pig feet and so forth and so on. So, I look back as…it being…that…what we have generated, what we have done in society, you know, I look back and I say we have done great things.

Participant 6 used her mother's life as an example:

> I think about being Black, I just think about people who have overcome. My mom went through that. Schools were closed for four years [due to attempts to block integration], she missed two years. The last two years, she went to go live with her grandmother in the next county so she could go to school. It was something like crazy, 20 kids living in that house because that's just kind of what the situation required. Um, but they all worked together and they got it done. And, she managed to get all of her class work done so that she could graduate on time and go to college.

Have made contributions to America. Typically, participants highlighted the accomplishments that Black Americans made in and for America. Participant 6 explained:

> I really look forward to the day that experiences of Black Americans is not just something that is limited to February and not just something that is celebrated in an anniversary that ends with a five or a zero. Um, but something that is—and something that is not just celebrated by Black America, but something that is celebrated by America. Because, um, like Langston said, we too—I, too am America. We are a part of this great fabric of this country. Not to be marginalized to the shortest month of the year and not whose history is to be tolerated, um, as part of some diversity quota, but to be celebrated as part of the greater fabric.

Participant 8 mentioned inventions of Black Americans, "We have done great deeds, we have accomplished things, and we have came a long way. We have invented things as to

make life easier for us that have been adopted and stolen by other folks and other races of people. And, I just—I feel proud, I feel good about being Black."

"Your accomplishments are marginalized" (Participant 6). Participants who felt that other Americans think of African Americans negatively fell under this core idea.

Have to prove yourself. Typically, participants felt that to be Black, one must prove oneself to other people. Using a football analogy from Superbowl 44, Participant 7 explained:

> You know, we never can reach up to the Peyton Manning standards. And Tom Brady. I think the one in Philadelphia, I mean, I don't put him there, but I think he should get more credit than he does. McNabb. I think McNabb should get more credit than he does. I've seen sometimes Peyton, like in the superbowl—[the commentator said] well that guy just jumped on the ball, but, you know, if McNabb threw it, they are more quick to say it's a poor throw, you know. Or, it's a poor read. It was a poor read. But, that Black guy had studied Peyton Manning very well and Peyton—well [the other player] knew where he was going to throw that ball.

Participant 6 said:

> My mother's always said to be Black, just to make it, to be successful, you have to do 110%. You have to do 100%, meet all the expectations and then do a little beyond to be considered equal to someone who just gives 100% or even 90%. Um, I think a lot of times, even still in 2010 that is kind of what it means to be a Black person in America. Your accomplishments are marginalized,

Thought of negatively by others. Three participants said that Black Americans are thought of negatively by others. Participant 7 shared, "You know, people think you're the underdog sometimes. Uh, uh…you know sometimes you feel like the whole world is against you, but you know the Lord is on your side. Seems like, you know, you gotta pull yourself."

Participant 1 explained:

> That's the backside of being Black. Feeling like you're automatically going to be thought less of as opposed to thought more of when it comes to intelligence or ability in certain capacities. I think when it comes to athletics, we're expected to do well and things like that. But, I think that's just life. And just as much as I think with Asians, I that they're gonna do well with math *chuckles.* But…there are certain things that our race, certain stereotypes…that's the backside of being Black.

Opinions about the Black Church

The domain "Opinions about the Black Church" was assigned to participants' opinions of the Black Church.

"So much about me and [what] I learned about myself culturally comes from the Black Church (Participant 6). Participants who spoke of the church as psychodynamically influential and as a developmental incubator fell under this core idea.

Importance of home church. Typically, participants talked about their home church as being an important bond/union. Participant 2, who moved from a rural area to a more urban area said she was looking to "find a place where I can really go, and you know, feel like—I guess kind of get that same feeling that I got from my home church." Participant 7 is a member of the church that he was Baptized in as a little boy. Though she expressed some displeasure with her church, Participant 5 explained that she attends the church because, "It's just a place I grew up in and I live in the area so, it's just the place I go to until I can find somewhere else."

Culture. Typically participants talked about the draw of the Black Church as being a culture. Participant 1explained "I love church culture. I love it. And, I see it now

as just a church culture." Participant 2 called the Black Church "soulful and so lively." Participant 6 explained, "for me, being in a Black Church, growing up in a Black church, even how it informs me today it's so, it was about so much more than just faith. Faith was a big part of it, but it was—it was culture."

It is an identity. Three participants explained that the Black Church was a source of identity. Participant 2 explained, "and I've always attended a Black Church. And, I think that it's just, I mean, it second nature. It's a part of life to me." Participant 6 said, "This weekend, this Sunday, I'm singing 'Lift Every Voice And Sing' for offering because people need to know about Black history *laughs,* and Black History month and the Negro National Anthem and if you did not get that anywhere else, I want you to be able to get it there. Sidenote, because so much about me is and what I learned about myself culturally comes from the Black Church." Participant 1 explained:

> It's just something, this sense of joy that you feel in people. This sense of joy in expression or…this sentiment of really feeling it. And that's what you get in the Black Church. It's a little bit different. I mean, it may be a little bit more—seems a little bit angry, a little bit more—a little harder than more so in a multicultural church where it seems to be a little bit more, you know, subdued. Maybe tears and such instead of exclamations and that—but I love that with the Black church. It makes me feel a part… And it's an identity that everyone else doesn't experience.

Empowerment. Three participants spoke of the Black Church as a place that empowered them. In explaining her preference for attending a Black Church, Participant 2 said, "you know, you do get this sense of, you know, being empowered or being, you know, like you can…you know that you can do things and you know, it just kind of speaks to you as a person or speaks to me as a Black person as opposed to going somewhere else." Participant 7 called the Black Church a place of leadership. "The Black

church has been the, the position of leadership, you know, kind of help us, guide us, especially when it comes to politics…. A lot of things are discussed there. You know, the Black Church, in our area, since slavery has been where we met at."

Training for life. Three participants mentioned the life skills they learned as a result of attending a Black Church. Participant 6 said that her Black Church, "cultivated an atmosphere of ability" such that there was a "sense that I could do whatever I set my mind to do." Participant 5 explained that the lessons she learned in the Black Church gave her skills to learn how to work with people: "the more you're involved in church and the older you are, you realize that everybody has a purpose and these people are vessels and you look beyond their weaknesses and you know, realize this is what God has sent them to deliver to you." Participant 6 described specific experiences:

> I remember things that I had to do and some of them weren't even related to age. They were just things that those adults believed that children should get and children should know. Their way of making sure that children knew them was to make sure that they got them in church. And, so, we would have Mother's Day recitations, which were these little poems that you had to memorize. I HATED it when I was a kid. HATED it. Like why? Why? Mama why? But, I would stand in the middle of the kitchen floor with my little index cards and memorize it and try to slide it back and my mama would say, "do it again" and I'd do again. "Do it again. Make sure you know it. Do it again." Because I had to go in front of the church. They had a program after service on Sundays where you would have to say your recitation. Mother's Day program. Little kids lined up in the front row in all their Sunday finery would get up there at a podium in front of a microphone and say these poems. Which taught me how to speak in public. Which taught me how to prepare for a presentation. Which taught me it's ok if you mess up because there's still going to be people around who are going to encourage you and say "that's ok baby, you can still do it." I learned all those things in the Black Church. You know, those things didn't so much have to do with faith or God…They didn't overtly have to do with faith, um, but they informed who I was. They—they created, uh…character. You know, they were character building exercises when I look back on it now… It was important in that Black Church in THE Black Church for me to not only know God and the creator but also to know who I was.

"Nowhere else is it ok to express yourself so wildly and freely" (Participant 1). Participants who talked about the ways in which African Americans behave in church fell under this core idea.

Singing. Typically participants talked about the singing in the Black Church as being a positive experience. Participant 3 explained, "The singing. I think that the praise and worship helps me to get into the place where I am just glorifying God. It helps me to get in the mindset." Participant 1 said, "I love shouting music, I love all of it. I love that." Participant 2 explained, "It's just so soulful and so lively. Like, it's not dry and I mean *laughs* you know, you get into the songs, you get into the spirituals."

Expressiveness. Typically, participants highlighted the expressiveness of the Black Church as being a positive experience. Participant 1 talked about the "exclamations" of the Black Church. Participant 5 said:

> I think the Black Church is very important. I think that, um, having attended pure White churches, I think that there is just an atmosphere of praise, um, an atmosphere of, you know, holding those emotions in until it's praise and worship and until you're in church and the preacher says something or the choir sings something and then you get your shout on, or you cry, or you do—or you fall out. Or you do whatever, whatever you need to do to get that emotion out.

Participant 7 explained how members of the Black Church stay in church longer than White Americans.

> Maybe I could go to the White church, but you know—just go to integrate and I still can get something out of it. You know they—they don't preach as long as we do. They're short, you know, but they'll give you a good message. They give you like 15 minutes. You go in there at 11 o'clock, you're out by 12 o'clock. Not my

church. 1:30, sometimes something to two. But, they don't do as much singing as we do.

Call and response. Typically, participants mentioned the call-and response aspect of the Black Church. In explaining her preference for a Black Church, Participant 2 said, "you get into the sermon and it's like the call and response. I mean, it's so….soulful. *laughter.*" Participant 1 said:

> I can't think of any other context where when someone is preaching, that there is a response. *Chuckles.* And, just certain things that happen there. Nowhere else is it ok to like, to just you know, express yourself so freely and wildly…and you know, to shout all over the benches and up and down the aisles. Nowhere else that's really—even—even areas that are deemed for expression, I can't see people just—I can't see people expressing themselves so freely as they do there. I like that. I love it.

Preaching. Three participants specified the preaching as an important aspect of the Black Church. Participant 5 explained the most important aspect of her experience at the Black Church:

> I think some good word. Um…and, I think it used to be and it still is, um, singing and worshipping, the atmosphere of worship, but I think, I guess the older I get, and it's funny, the more education I get, um…the more I want to hear a good well-rounded word. Um, a word that, you know, that, where I can leave with something to think about for the week, something to—something that can lead a discussion between my husband and I or at Sunday dinner.

Worship. Two participants mentioned worship as an important aspect of the Black Church. Participant 8 explained worship:

> It's a point in when you usher in the holy spirit. You know, in John, the 14th chapter I think it was, when God said, "I will leave you, but I won't leave you comfortless," that's right, comfortless. So, when you go into praise and worship, you usher in the holy spirit and when that holy spirit comes in, it's supposed to be

> a comfort unto you because God—Jesus before he left this earth said "I leave this. I'm not going to leave you alone." So, what you're going through, the holy spirit can come in and the praise, the worship is letting you actually praise Him, whatever you're going through, and—and inviting the holy spirit in, the comforter in that he had promised will be there with us.

"sense of togetherness. It's a unit" (Participant 1). Participants who spoke about the community and togetherness that one feels in the Black Church fell under this core idea.

Helping others. Typically, participants expressed that the Black Church was a positive outlet for helping others. Participant 4 said, "Others that really need the help, Black churches really step up and help." Participant 8 explained that an important part of the Black Church was "the recognizing of those of us fortunate as we are, the prayer…for those that's going through…and seeking some type of refuge that we can do to help those that's in need."

Defines family. Two participants said that the Black Church defined family for them. Participant 4 said, "I think it defines family, also. Especially to me, it defines family in the Black church because…if someone don't have and they don't have family to give it to them, they immediately go to the Black church. So, I think it's very important."

Being around Black people. Three participants said the Black Church is the place where they can be around other Black people. Participant 5 expressed, "I enjoy…being around Black people. And, really the Black church is the place where I can be around Black people. And, whether it's a church program, whether it's like the Martin Luther King event that we went to a lot, I mean, it's just nice to be around Black people who

support one another. And, you know, you can tear each other down with your words, I mean, but in the end, it's just nice to, to be around Black people. And, the church truly truly, I guess is that 'safe haven'."

"The Black Church is not genuine" (Participant 3). Participants who expressed disdain for the Black Church fell under this category.

People in church can be challenging. Two participants recalled how the people within the Black Church make the Black Church challenging. Participant 3 said, "A lot of Black people, I think, are jealous…Don't want to work for their own, but want to take what you have to give."

Used as a crutch. Two participants mentioned Black people using the Black Church as a crutch. Participant 3 said, "I think Black people use the church as a crutch, a place where they can come in and pretend, but not really do anything different with their lives. Still living the same way they were and not bothering to be better or to change. So, I think it is a problem with the Black Church."

African American Image of God

The domain "African American Image of God" was assigned to participants' responses as to whether their opinions about what it means to be Black influenced their Image of God.

"I can't say that [racial identity attitudes] has" (Participant 2). Participants who revealed that their racial identity attitudes did not influence their Image of God fell under this category.

Has not influenced. Typically, participants responded that their racial identity attitudes did not influence their Image of God. Participant 6 said, "I never saw God as some great man with an afro and a dashiki on…You know, I think my experience being Black has really brought –some aspects of scripture has given me a greater understanding of some aspects of Scripture...But how I see God? *Indicated no*." Participant 4 explained, "My Image of God or, yeah, my thoughts on God Influence where I am or who I am but, I don't think it influences the other way around when I think of the image of God."

"How I think of Black people, I just automatically think of God being there for Black people" (Participant 5). Participants who felt their racial identity attitudes had influenced their Image of God fell under this core idea.

God has been cornerstone. Three participants said that God has been the cornerstone for Black Americans. Participant 8 explained, "I think God said, "well look, these people here, they goin' be my living testimony" Because we went from the plantation to our own homes. We ain't got no more outhouses, we got in-houses. We got the same rights and privilege that most people got today. And, I think God brought us through to be a testimony that God is God and He can do all things." Participant 5 explained, "I guess how I think of Black people, I just automatically think of God being there with Black people. Not that He's not there with other people, but that, I mean, truly, I don't know, I guess God—think that God has brought us where we are. So, I connect the two."

Case Illustrations

To further capture the richness of this data set, four cases are provided in some depth. Results from the qualitative interview suggest that actual Image of God of African Americans did not differ from images reported in studies with majority White participants. In such studies, God was described abstractly (Gibson, 2007), as a male (Foster & Keating, 1992), and was given the adjectives of loving (Kunkel et al., 1999), compassionate (Tamayo & Dugas, 1981), and judging (Kunkel et al., 1999). However, participants in the qualitative study did elucidate the uniqueness of the God-image when housed within the confines of the Black Church. In fact, pairing Image of God with racial identity and perceptions about the Black Church yielded a very discernable divide between younger participants (age < 50) and older participants (age > 50), as illustrated in the first case. The second case will examine the Image of God of a young African American male who identified as homosexual. Although this participant described a God-image that was confusing and conflicted, this participant expressed very strong, positive feelings about the Black Church. The third case will examine a participant whose responses made her distinguishable in this sample. This participant did not identify as Black, nor was the Black church important to her. In fact, this participant said she felt the presence of God more when she attended White churches. Finally, the Image of God of an older man who had conventional attitudes about God, nondescript attitudes about the Black church, and conflicting attitudes about his race is examined.

Participant 2 vs. Participant 8 (old vs. young)

Participant 2 is a 28 year old African American woman who revealed that the Black Church was second nature to her. Participant 2 is currently a teacher and revealed during the interview in asides that she is feeling disconnected at work. Participant 2 said that she grew up in the church and mentioned church activities like Sunday School and Vacation Bible School as being formative to her personhood. Participant 2 succinctly revealed that to be Black is to be different culturally. Though Participant 2 said that "I think that Black people sometimes rely too much on what other people tell us as opposed to going back and checking for themselves," Participant 2 explained that the kinship among African Americans was the most important aspect of her experience as a Black American. Participant 2's race centrality was well above the mean (*M* centrality = 6), which paralleled her responses on the subjective importance she placed on being a Black American. In addition, the item variance was small (*SD* centrality = .54), suggesting that Participant 2 likely agreed with items on that scale. When she was talking about the Black Church, Participant 2 explained:

> You know, you do get this sense of, you know, being empowered or being, you know, like you can…you know that you can do things and you know, it just kind of speaks to you as a person or speaks to me as a Black person as opposed to going somewhere else. And I also think it's a level of comfort, you know. We're all comfortable, a lot more comfortable in my opinion around people like ourselves… even if…I were to go or to visit a church of a different race, I would want to take somebody Black with me, you know, just so I'm not the only one, you know. So, I think if you go, you know, anywhere you go you kind of like to go where you know you're already gonna be accepted.

Acceptance and comfort were associated with the Black Church, what Participant 2 called soulful.

In direct contrast, Participant 8 talked about his individual experience at his church. Participant 8 is a 58-year-old handyman who used to be in law enforcement and the military. Participant 8 explained that his Image of God was one of security, protection, and busy hands. Whereas Participant 8 enjoyed the fellowship of his church and enjoyed helping others, it was more important for Participant 8 that his Pastor deliver a sermon that transcended race and space. Participant 8 explained that, historically, his church was Black, but that the fact that his church was a Black Church was not important to him:

> I don't look at it as Black because we have, you know, every now and then, we have White people to come in. And, I just can't say Black. Black church. I know it was established during—our church is a hundred and forty something years old, so it was established in, in a time and a period when everything—race was a factor, right? But, God has no respect of persons, you know? Black, White, blue, green. I don't even look at it as a Black church, you know? I don't even, you know, I don't even let it instill in my mind. The history of the church is Black. Don't get me wrong, you know, that's gonna be respected because it's, it's got a history. But, as far as a church, *guffaws,* what, God tells us, Jesus is coming back for a church not made by man. So, our church has a history as far as being Black, by having 145 years, but the image of our church is for all people that believe in Christ Jesus. So, as I look at it going into it, I don't walk in there and say, "hey, I'm going into my Black church." I look at it as going into the house of worship where we fellowship together and praise God.

Participant 8 had a mean centrality score that was slightly above the mean (*M* centrality = 4.25) with a high standard deviation (*SD* centrality = 2.38), suggesting variability in Participant 8's responses to scale items. Participant 8 explained that he used to dislike the fact that he was a Black American, but was proud of the accomplishments of his race. When asked what was the most important aspect of his experience as a Black American, Participant 8 listed off personal accomplishments, suggesting that Participant 8 viewed himself more as an individual as opposed to a member of the Black kinship, as explained

by Participant 2. Both Participant 2 and Participant 8 shared the ideological belief of assimilation, which argues that Black Americans should adopt the values and behaviors of the mainstream.

Participant 1 (has conflicting feelings about God but loves Black Church)

Participant 1 is a male who identifies as homosexual. Participant 1 explained that his Image of God depended on the context in which God was presented. For example:

> If I'm in a context that's inviting for me or that—in a context where God is presented and He's presented in a way that's amicable. In a way that— or relationship is presented. In a way that is not so…far away. Is not so this damning God or this mystical creature, this unknown. When I think of those things, I feel very warm. I feel a sense of warmth. I feel a sense of—almost like the sun. Like, you know, how—the rays of the sun. That's kinda how it makes me feel. But then when I think of God in another sense of—sometimes as He's presented in a way that's very damning or in a way that's…confusing or in a way that I don't understand or in a way that I don't feel is my experience, or a God that's very distant from me. It makes me feel somewhat separate.

Participant 1 explained that his personal experiences led him on a journey whereby he found other sources that exemplified the God that made him feel a sense of warmth, particularly in nature. Participant 1attributed the damning and confusing God to be a part of the church. According to Participant 1:

> At this point, church, to me, has become big business. I see how people utilize certain arguments from the bible, and they make it profitable. And, so, currently, I go to church because it's a source of income with working with the music department. That's the reason why I choose to go to church. I see it as a source of income. I don't really see—I don't feel the need to go. I don't feel that it matures me spirituality. No more than life does itself.

A theme of Participant 1's interview was that of duality. In fact, Participant 1 distinguished between the Church and the Black Church, such that, based on his vitriolic

responses about the church, the interviewer was surprised that Participant 1 had such favorable opinions about the Black Church. "I see its problems, but I LOVE it. I love the Black expression…and I just don't feel as connected—because I do identify myself as being Black, I do identify so heavily with the Black experience, and so I love it. I love being a part—I love—I love church culture." It seems that Participant 1 was able to differentiate between the church, which to Participant 1 is laws, mandates, and big business, and the Black church, which is a source of expression and a place of expressiveness for Black Americans.

Participant 3 (hates Church and doesn't identify as Black)

Participant 3 was an anomaly in that she did not identify as Black, nor did she like the Black Church. According to Participant 3, the only reason why she attends her current church is because it is her husband's church. According to Participant 3, "Honestly, I do not like the church. I don't think the people in the church really live the message of the church so…I actually enjoyed the White church I was going to more than this church, but I stopped going to it so I could go with my husband." When asked what she liked about the White church she attended, Participant 3 revealed:

> I think that the White Church I went to was more genuine in their image of God. They showed love and seemed to care about their neighbor. I do not see that a lot in the Black Church or with Black people. A lot of times, it seems like they just use the church as a crutch and it's not real. I think the White church, it is more real.

And, by crutch, Participant 3 explained, that church was a "a place where [Black people] can come in and pretend, but not really do anything different with their lives. Still living the same way they were and not bothering to be better or to change. So, I think it is a

problem with the Black Church." Participant 3 had the lowest race centrality score (*M* centrality = 2.25, *SD* centrality = 1.488) and did not identify herself as Black. "I think that I am a good person, dependable. I never really thought about if it was because I was Black. I just think it is who I am." Like Participant 8, Participant 3 highlighted an individual accomplishment as the most important aspect of her experience as a Black American: owning her own business.

Participant 7 (has conventional feelings about God and church but is conflicted about his race).

Participant 7, a medical doctor, was adamant about his beliefs in the biblical God and the trinity. Throughout the interview, Participant 7 distinguished God as "God the father" and explained that he believed "in the three-God head" or the trinity. When talking about his self-esteem, Participant 7 explained, "I basically don't bend God. He wants us to love ourselves—love our neighbors just as we love ourselves. That's what the bible says, you know. So, yeah. So, I read that as God wants us to have good self-esteem because He made us and whatever circumstance we have, He's gonna help us through it. And, so we should have a—you know, I have a good self-esteem because of God, because I know He'll be there for me." Participant 7 was clear that his God was a male because that was the way God was explained in the bible. When Participant 7 talked about his race, however, Participant 7 was not as clear:

> That is not that important to me, color. You know, I always wanted—I'd like for—it would be nice if all races could go to one church, and that part kind of—always bothered me. Why do the Whites have their church over there, you know and the Blacks have their churches… I grew up in the 60s, you know, and probably one race felt like they were more superior than the other, you know. They couldn't—and they didn't want to be with us. So that—that bothers me.

Participant 7 seemed to teeter between his feelings about being Black and his desires to be seen as an individual." I think it's great to be Black. I'm—I'm proud. I'm proud to be Black. A lot of people might not think so because I listen to White music *laughs.* I listen to mostly White Gospel. Uh, yeah, I do. I listen to a little Black… But, I'm different."

Although Participant 7 had a higher mean centrality score among participants in their 50s, Participant 7's mean centrality was lower than participants who were younger than 50 years of age (*M* centrality = 5.13, *SD* centrality = 2.1). Again, this can be explained in the subtle contradictions in Participant 7's statements:

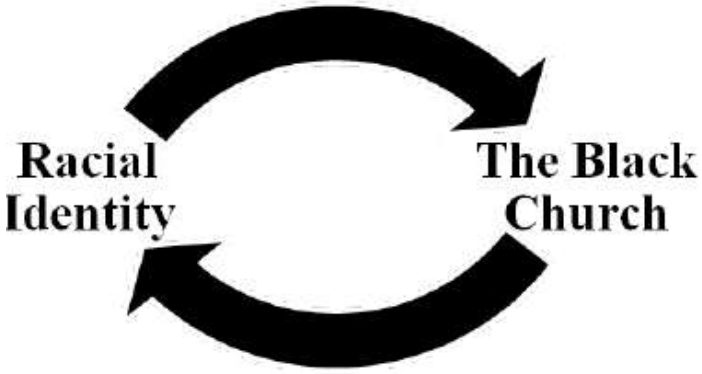
> I grew up in the 60s, where I wish I wasn't as dark as I was, you know I—because if you were dark, you were looked down on and my skin was very dark. Uh, but, now, uh, I think I am beautiful, you know. I heard people say Good Hair and all this stuff, my hair is good too, I like my hair. It's good to me.

Participant 7 explained that Black Americans look down on themselves because of slavery and expressed a kinship with the African students he knew in college, "I ended up hanging around a lot of Africans and West Indians. And, matter of fact, they thought I was one of them…I see it in a lot of Africans, they came over, they had pride, but maybe, like they said, we're seeing the cream of the crop. They had a lot of pride. Oh man, boy. They always thought they were smarter." Participant 7 revealed that he believed God loves everyone equally and that he believed in one race, "the human race." The most important aspect of his experience as a Black American was being an underdog and thought of as not as capable because of the color of his skin.

MIBI and CQR

Overall participants were less likely to say that their Image of God was influenced by their Racial Identity Attitudes. Younger participants (age < 50) were more likely to say that the Black Church was important. This trend supports scholars and researchers who have posited that African Americans who strongly identify with their race are more likely to engage in race-related activities such as attending a Black Church (Frame & Williams, 1996; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRae et at., 1999; Utsey et al., 2008; Willis, 2008). (See Figure 8)

Figure 8: Racial Identity Attitudes and Black Church



When asked if racial attitudes influenced their choice to attend a Black Church, participants who were in their 50s responded that it had not, while participants in their 20s and 30s responded that it had. Participant 6 stands out of this group as she answered

that her racial identity attitudes had not influenced her choice to attend a Black Church. Participant 6 explained, "No. Because I made the choice to attend a multiracial church. Um…*laughs.* I'm very like—I love learning about African Americans, African American culture, um, the mark that Black People have made in our country and overall society. But not to the exclusion of anybody else." When asked if their racial identity attitudes influenced their Image of God, participants were more likely to answer that it had not. Table 6 presents the overall trend in data between the qualitative interview and the MIBI.

Table 6 *Overall Trend in Data*

Age	#	Denomination	*M* Centrality	Highest Ideology	*SD* or item variance	BC Important?	RI influence BC	RI influence IOG
52	3	Baptist	2.25	Humanist	1.49	No	No	No
58	8	Baptist	4.25	Assimilation	2.38	No	No	Yes
53	7	Baptist	5.13	Humanist/ Assimilation	2.10	No	No	No
32	4	Methodist	5.38	Assimilation	1.77	Yes	Yes	No
27	1	Baptist	5.44	Humanist	1.45	Yes	Yes	Yes
28	6	Nondenominational with Baptist Roots	5.75	Humanist	1.17	Yes	No	No
28	2	Baptist	6	Assimilation	.54	Yes	Yes	No
26	5	Baptist	6.25	Assimilation	.71	Yes	Yes	Yes

Answered positively that the Black Church was Important to them, that their Racial Identity Attitudes influenced their choice to attend a Black Church and that their Racial Identity Attitudes influenced their Image of God

These findings suggest that the Black Church is important to Participants who strongly identify as Black. When considering participants' negative responses to the questions of their Racial Identity attitudes influencing their choice to attend a Black Church and their Image of God, these findings would suggest that God operates in a realm independent of race and church. Only Participant 1 and Participant 5 said that the Black Church was important to them and that their Racial Identity Attitudes influenced their choice to attend a Black Church and their Image of God. It should be noted that Participants 1 and 5 were the two youngest participants in this sample.

At least half of the participants in the study expressed the belief that God had an affinity for African Americans. If one were to delineate the Image of God construct into the separate domains that emerged from this data, the belief that God identified with Blacks would support the claim that the God of African Americans differs from the God of other Americans (Calhoun-Brown, 1999; Lincoln, 2003).

Summary

This chapter contained the results gleaned from a qualitative interview and an assessment of racial identity of 8 African Americans who were at least 25 and attended a rural Black Church at least once a month. Participant demographics were presented along with mean scores on the centrality and ideology subscales of the MIBI. In general, participants revealed that their image of God was a male. Participants generally perceived God as being omnipotent and consuming/all-encompassing. Most participants' reported a childhood churchgoing foundation and their family as having influenced their image of God. In addition, most participants revealed that they were proud to be Black.

Participants who were older (age < 50) had lower race centrality mean scores than participants who were younger (age > 50). Mean scores on the ideology subscales were less distinctive among participants; participants either agreed that Black Americans should work to join the dominant group (assimilation) or that Black Americans should view human beings collectively as having one race (humanist).

More distinctive in this sample was that participants who were older (age > 50) were more likely to say that the Black Church was not important to them as opposed to participants who were younger (age < 50). The findings in this study would suggest that the Black Church is important to participants of a certain age. Responses to interview questions about Racial Identity Attitudes also would reflect this. Although these findings also would suggest that God operates in a realm independent of race and church, at least half of the participants in the study expressed the belief that God had an affinity for African Americans. The beliefs about God that participants in this study would support the claim that the God of African Americans differs from the God of other Americans. In the next chapter, these findings, implications for Counselors and Counselor Educators, and limitations are discussed.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

> My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it came to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all…I believe God is everything, say Shug. (Walker, 1982, pgs. 202-3)

Overview

The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine the Image of God and Racial Identity of African Americans who attend a rural Black Church at least once a month. Researchers have shown that where African American underutilize mental health services (Ayalon & Young, 2005; Brown, 2004), they do utilize religious services, as their religious activity has been reported to outnumber White Americans in church attendance at every age, income level, and educational level (Chatters Taylor, & Lincoln, 1999; Hunt & Hunt, 2001; Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2008; Robinson, 2006; Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2001). To meet their religious and spiritual needs, African Americans are more likely to attend a Black Church (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). Compared to the research that suggests a proliferated amount of religious behavior, there have been very few research studies that have investigated the Image of God of African Americans (Calhoun-Brown, 1999; Cook, 2003; Muller, 2004), where Image of God measured both the cognitions and subjective affect that one assigned to God (Cook, 2003; Moriarty & Hoffman, 2007). Given the

history of oppression and suffering, the Image of God of African Americans has the potentiality to differ significantly from White Americans (Hoffman et al., 2007).

The researcher of this study questioned whether there was something in the Black Church experience that influenced African Americans' Image of God and Racial Identity, paramount variables that may supersede presenting concerns that are addressed in formal counseling relationships. Hence, this study could highlight the kind of help that African Americans seek in the spiritual, social, and psychological realm and ascertain how we, as counselors and supervisors, can meet some of these needs within the confines of formal counseling relationships. To measure the variables of Image of God and Racial Identity, a qualitative interview and a racial identity assessment were given to 8 African Americans who were at least 25 years old and attended a rural Black Church at least once a month. As the conversation between Alice Walker's Celie and Shug Avery transitioned from the Imperative ("tell me what your God look like") to the informative (Shug says, "I believe God is in everything"), this research study has so journeyed. What began as a series of research questions and scholarly suggestions emerged into a project that took shape and became informative.

Discussion of the Results

Seven research questions framed this investigation. Results based on the research questions are listed below. This study did not yield a large number of "general" cases, perhaps speaking to the unique characteristics of the group and the deeply hidden, convoluted beliefs and opinions that participants have about God and what it means to be Black.

RQ 1: How Do African Americans Who Attend A Black Church Describe Their Image of God?

In this study, participants' description of God fell along five domains: imagery, cognitions, feelings, characteristics, and beliefs. Generally, participants imaged of God as a male and/or a father-figure and described God as being omnipotent and consuming/all-encompassing. Other more frequent responses included imaging God as a light and acknowledging that God has a human form. At least half of the participants thought of God as a higher power/being and described God as being dependable and compassionate. Further, at least half of participants believed that they had to live right to please God and wanted to gain entry into heaven. In addition, at least half of the participants believed God had a plan for their lives and that God identified with the struggles of Black Americans.

In terms of the physical image of God that participants formulated, results from the qualitative interview suggested that actual Image of God of African Americans in this study did not differ from images reported in studies with majority White participants. In such studies, God was described abstractly (Gibson, 2007) and as a male (Foster & Keating, 1992). It did seem, however, that participants made a concerted effort to change the Image of God that they had when they were younger from the White man with blond hair and blue eyes. It is unsure what instigated this upheaval for participants, perhaps something that can be measured by the researcher in another study. For participants who previously held a White Image of God, this Image transitioned to an image that was more personally relevant (e.g., nature for Participant 1), an Image that was more biblically

sound (e.g., Participant 2), or an Image that took geography into account, especially as it related to Jesus Christ (e.g., Participant 5, Participant 7).

The cognitions, feelings, and characteristics of God that participants disclosed also were similar to the results gleaned from other researchers. God was given the adjectives of loving (Kunkel et al., 1999), compassionate (Tamayo & Dugas, 1981), and judging (Kunkel et al., 1999). In his investigation of the God-image, Roberts (1989) reported a two-factor model of God, what he called the male/female binary. In that study, God was nurturing and God was disciplining. Participants in this study revealed a fear of God, of wanting to please God, and a longing to make it into heaven. Roberts also argued that a disciplining God occurred more among people of a lower SES. Those findings were not substantiated in this study, as most participants spoke either of pleasing God or making it into heaven across income estimates. Hence, when it came to African Americans, there may be extraneous variables not tested in this study (e.g., Image of God of African Americans at a rural church vs. Image of God of African Americans at an Urban Church) that might supersede income variables found in other studies.

Participants' descriptions of God in the "beliefs about God" domain underscored the active God that is said to be worshiped by African Americans (Lincoln, 2003; Welch, 2009; Williams, 1993). For example, Participant 5 explained that, after an exodus from the church, she returned to the church when it became apparent to her that "God had a plan or a path for me that was very different from everyone around me." The idea of fatidic providence is not unique for African Americans (Anderson, 1996). However, there has been a consensus among scholars that the function of God as an active and animated member of their cosmos is a unique and historic trait among African Americans (Chireau,

2003). In addition, at least half the participants in this sample felt that God had a special plan or role for Black people, perhaps explaining their struggles in America and their fealty with Christianity. Participant 6 captured this sentiment when she said, "And people who had every, every obstacle, every roadblock possible thrown at us… We overcame… we have been able to accomplish to me, in my mind, by the grace of God." This linkage of the Black struggle and Black faith could substantiate the sentiment that God identifies with Blacks. According to Cone (2008), "the predominant themes of justice, hope, and love have characterized the Black faith, assuring believers that, despite White assertion of superiority, Black are made in the image of God and are beloved children of God" (p. 701). Additionally, the belief among participants in this study that God identified with the struggle of Blacks mirrored the statements of scholars who purported that African Americans needed a personally relevant and applicable God (e.g., Frazier, 1963; Lincoln, 2003).

RQ 2: To What Extent Do They Use Similar Language to Describe Their Parents?

Participant descriptions of their parents were captured under one domain: descriptions of parents. At least half of the participants in this sample described their mother's positive energy as being like God. In addition, at least half the participants in this study described both their parents as loving, a good resource, and invested in their development. Participants' perception of their attachment to one or both parents was not assessed in this study. Other researchers have investigated the role of parental attachment style in shaping the Image of God of both children and adults (Coles, 1990; Heller, 1986; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992; Moriarty & Hoffman, 2007; Rizutto, 1979). Researchers have extrapolated that the mother's influence in the God-image is a significant indicator

of positive self-esteem (Dickie et al., 2006). In this study, participants self-reported a positive self-esteem, but also were more likely to respond that both parents resembled a description of God. In terms of a distinct delineation between parents, Participant 1 and 8 distinguished between their parents. In both cases, the fathers of these two Participants (both men) were perceived as being distant and reserved. Participant 2 grew up in a single parent home and spoke from that experience. Otherwise, all other participants (at least half) spoke from the perspective of both parents exemplifying some description that the participant applied to God.

RQ 3: To What Extent Do They Use Similar Language to Describe Themselves?

The domain "descriptions of self" captured participants' perception of the characteristics that they shared with God. In terms of representativeness of the sample, there were no categories that captured at least half of the cases. When asked if they shared some traits or characteristics with God, most participants spoke of themselves in ideal terms. For example, Participant 7 explained, "I try to be loving. But, of course, I'm imperfect, I'm man. So, in my—that's loving and sometimes maybe I stumble, but He always loves." Participants were less likely to whole-heartedly agree that they shared the characteristics of God and more likely to use words like "try" or "I think" as they spoke about themselves. Even when participants were asked if they thought their Image of God was related to their opinions of themselves or the confidence they have in themselves, which was defined as their self-esteem, participants who agreed that there was a connection [Participant 1, 4, 5, 6 (to an extent), and 7] also spoke tentatively, using words like "think" and "try." For the purpose of a future research study, it might be more helpful to assess self-esteem with the knowledge that there might be a self-report bias, as

opposed to asking about self-esteem and correlations to God, where there might have been a bias of humility or an experience of not comprehending the question.

RQ4: What Other Variables Influence their God-image?

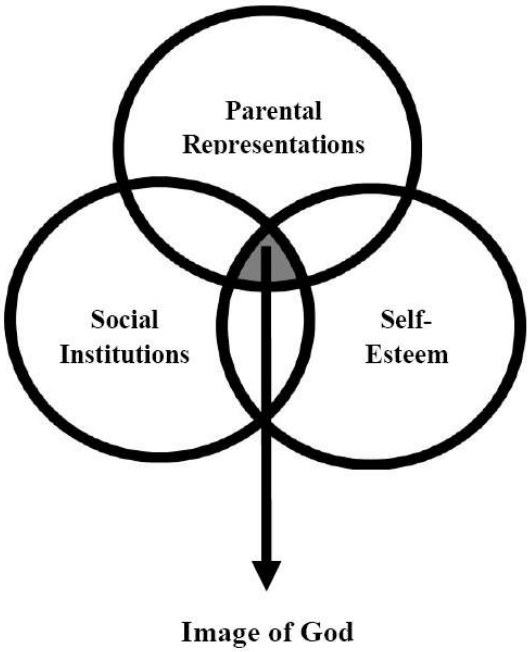
Because the Image of God literature has varied on the variables that do, in fact, influence one's Image of God (Gibson, 2007), this research question was created as a catchall. The domain, "Influences on Image of God" captured participants' responses to additional influences on their Image of God. In general, participants mentioned their families and a childhood church-going foundation as being influential in shaping their Image of God. These responses were viewed as psychodynamic influences. Moriarty and Hoffman (2007) explained that one's Image of God can be shaped by an individual's family history. In addition, Rizutto (1979) found that parents were extremely influential in the God-image, such that God could become the ideal parent, or, in the case of an abusive or detached parent, God could become the compensatory parent. Participants in this sample talked about the importance of their family and their parents in instilling in them the principles of God. In addition, family members and parents also were integral in instilling in participants the regularity of attending church functions, even at an early age. It would seem that these psychodynamic influences were salient with participants during interviews.

At least half of the participants said that the bible and regular church attendance influenced their Image of God. These responses were viewed as church-going influences. Researchers have investigated frequency of church attending behaviors on thoughts of God. Krause (2007) found that the more one attends church or engages in religious

behaviors (i.e., reading the bible), the more sustained their church involvement behavior. Participant church-influences in this study would be consistent with this finding.

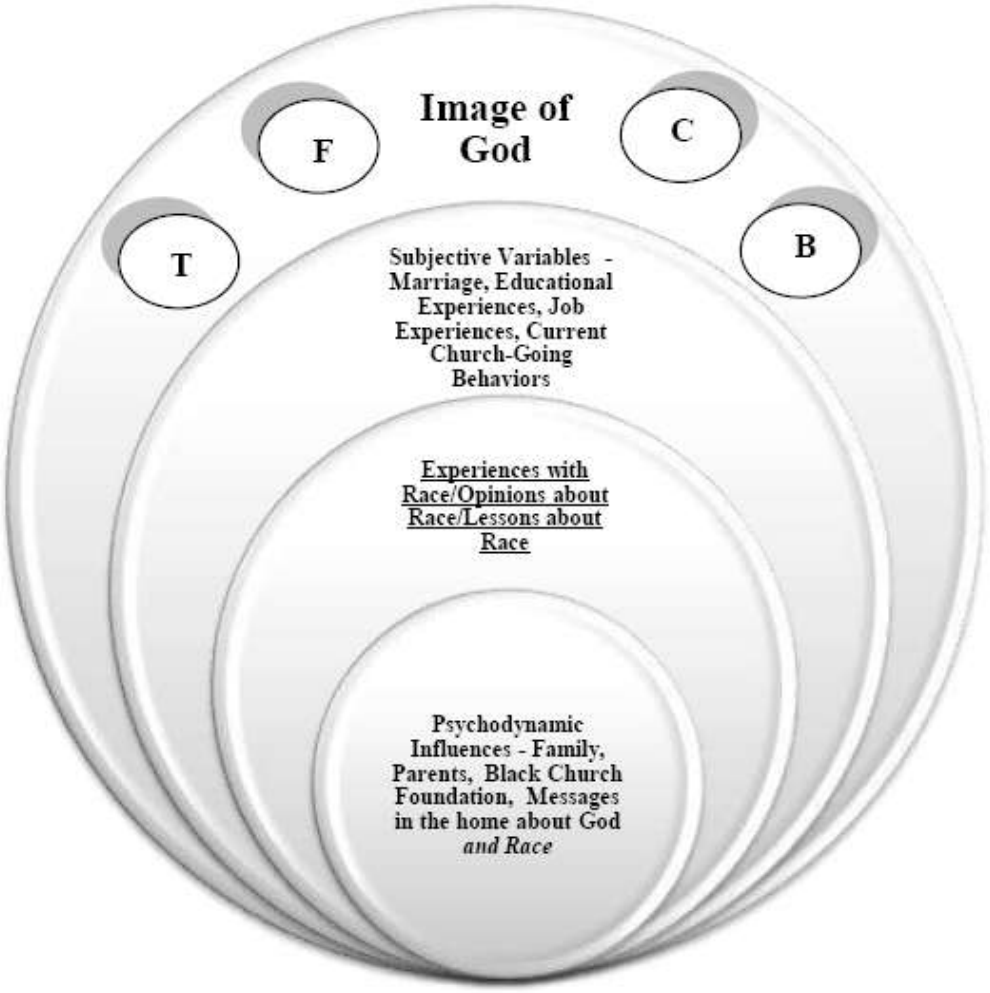
In attempts to grasp the enigmatic construct of Image of God, researchers have postulated a number of potentially influential variables, including income (Dickie, Eshleman, Merasco, Shepard, Wilt, & Johnson, 1997; Roberts, 1989), gender (Foster & Keating, 1992; Lambert & Kurpius, 2004), and personality correlates (Bradshaw, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2008). Researchers also have examined the influence of abuse status (Kane, Cheston, & Greer, 1993; Muller, 2004; Murray-Swank & Pargament, 2005), end of life salience (Matt, 1987), threat, loss, and stressful situations (Maynard, Gorsuch, & Bjorck, 2001), mental health (Bradshaw, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2008; Schaap-Jonker et al., 2002), and self-esteem (Kunkel et al., 1999) on the God-image. Interestingly, the variables generated by most of the participants in this study highlight substantial gaps in the literature. At least half of participants in this study attributed experiences in college, prodigal experiences, and being married as having influenced their Image of God. These responses were viewed as personal experiences. If we were to revisit Figure 2, which illustrated Piedmont et al.'s (1997) Conceptual Image of God Model, we see the need to evolve or make more definitive the Image of God construct.

Figure 2: Piedmont et al.'s (1997) Conceptual Image of God Model



Based on the findings in this study, the Image of God construct would best be represented as a continuing and iterative relationship among variables, including how one perceives one's race and experiences one learned as a child in the home. A suggested model of Image of God specific to African Americans is represented in Figure 9, a model that will continue to evolve.

Figure 9: Welch Suggested Image of God Model



Imaging that the researcher threw a pebble into a lake that expanded outward, but initiated at the point the pebble hit the water, a suggested model for Image of God was derived. Starting at the lowest, and perhaps most reverberating point, the concentric

circles begin with psychodynamic influences, that is, the influence of family, parents, messages about God, and messages about race. Participants in this study iterated that their Image of God began at a young age with their parents and with having to attend church functions. Researchers have found that childhood messages about race would be a psychodynamic influence (Cunningham, 1997; Neblett et al., 2008; Thompson, 1999; Townsend & Lanphier, 2007); however, this was not assessed in the current study.

The second concentric circle includes experiences with race, opinions about race, and lessons learned about race. At last half of the participants in this study mentioned slavery and the oppression of African Americans. Whereas three participants in this study would have been alive during the civil rights era (age > 50), none of the participants in this study were alive during slavery. It seems that African Americans in this study learned the history of slavery and this history was salient for them. This concentric circle follows the psychodynamic circle in that, theoretically, messages about race that were learned in the home would be built upon as the participant begins to have experiences in school (e.g., learning about Black history) or personally (e.g., experiencing discrimination). The third concentric circle highlights those personal experiences that were most relevant for participants in this study. Upon a foundation of home life and experiences with race, these participants gained further personal experiences that fit into the schema or concept that were formulating about who God is and what God does. These experiences informed participants' Image of God, where Image of God is an actual image and a conflation of thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and beliefs.

RQ 5: How Does Type of Black Church (Other-worldly vs. This-worldly) Influence Their God-image?

The domain "church orientation" captured participants' perception of their church's orientation (1) and if this orientation influenced their Image of God (2). In terms of representativeness of the sample, there were no categories that captured at least half of the cases in terms of participants distinguishing which orientation most fit their church. In addition, at least half of the participants answered that their church's supposed orientation did not influence their Image of God. It did not seem that participants' church orientation was influential to participants. It would seem that other variables were personally more influential than was the actual mission of their church. For example, considering Participant 5 whose current Black Church was her home church:

> I grew up in it. Um, and my husband and I constantly talk about how we would like to find another one, one that we can both with—you know, go to together. Right now, it's just, I guess, a place of…just…I guess normalcy. It's just a place I grew up in and I live in the area so, it's just the place I go to until I can find somewhere else.

Again, the fact that this was the Participant's home church, arguably a psychodynamically potent influence, took precedence over Participant 5's current disdain with her church. It would seem that if the Black Church holds personal (e.g., Participant 5) importance to the individual, he or she would stay in the church.

In terms of answering Research Question 4, the researcher would say that, based on this sample, the church orientation did not influence participant's physical, cognitive, or affective Image of God, nor did it influence the characteristics of God. However, it may have influenced participants' beliefs about God. Intuitively, one would think that if a

person is more other-worldly in their spiritual walk, he or she would experience some anxiety over the state of their entry into heaven. Additionally, this research question points to the possibility that perhaps the role of black church has changed from overt activism to inverted acts of encouragement and empowerment. For example, Participant 6 described the preacher of her Black Church operating "not in a Black pride type of sense or Black power kind of sense, Angela Davis kind of sense." However, the fact that her Black Church prepared her for life, taught her who she was, and instilled pride in her for her race was apparent.

To explain the lack of social activism perceived in the Black Church today, Baldwin (2003) asserted that churches have "increasingly turned to revivals, massive crusades, a gospel of prosperity positivism, and matters of personal salvation as a substitute for active involvement in social, political, and economic change...black churches have too often been unresponsive to social urgencies in the period since the civil rights movement" (p. 33). As an institution, the Black church has a history of being both secular and spiritual. The black church can lead people to the polls and lead them in praise and worship. Baldwin argued that the Black church is both otherworldly and present-life oriented, as "throughout its history [the church] has combined an emphasis on the rewards of heaven with an active participation in temporal affairs" (p. 15). Further, Billingsley (1999) posited there were three types of churches in the Black Community: the conservative church concerned with basic spiritual and biblical work, the church whose philosophy is to be socially conscious with the saving of souls taking precedence over radical social action, and finally the activists church, which focuses on ministering to the "whole person and the whole community" (p.185).

Viewed together, these arguments paint a construct of "church orientation" to be like water, as slippery a construct as "Image of God." Perhaps, like water, these two concepts are determinant upon the atmosphere in which it exists. It would seem that this distinction collapses under the strain of more pressing variables (i.e., home church, finding the Black Church important). Perhaps if researchers are conducting a longitudinal analysis in one church, the church orientation distinction becomes helpful. However, in a rural context, when surveying people across churches, there one might find other variables that are more influential, namely the foundation of going to church as a child and the need to perpetuate this behavior.

RQ 6: How Do Racial Identity Attitudes Influence Attendance at/choice of a Black Church?

To capture participants' attitudes about what it means to be Black, the domains "attitudes about what it means to be Black" and "opinions about the Black Church" were created. In addition, participants were given the MIBI, which assessed their racial identity attitudes on two scales: centrality and ideology. In general, participants expressed that they were proud to be Black. Attesting to the equanimity of the sample, at least half of the participants defined the Black experience as a unique one. In addition, at least half of participants thought of Black Americans as survivors, and mentioned that Black Americans had a rich heritage and had made contributions to America. At least half of participants noted that Black Americans embody stereotypes, are passive, and are thought of negatively by others. In terms of their opinions about the Black Church, participants typically spoke of the importance of their home church and the fact that the Black Church was a distinct cultural experience. At least half of the participants acknowledged that

singing, expressiveness, call and response, and helping others were important components in their experience at the Black Church.

When viewed with the MIBI, participants who had a higher race centrality mean score on the MIBI found the Black church important. That is, participants who normatively defined themselves as a Black American and agreed with items on the MIBI scale were more likely to think the Black Church was important and have positive opinions about the Black Church, supporting the claim that African Americans who strongly identify with race are more likely to engage in race-related behaviors like attending a Black Church (Frame & Williams, 1996; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; McRae et at., 1999; Utsey et al., 2008; Willis, 2008). In terms of the ideology subscales, unlike researchers who have found that individuals with a high race centrality mean score also scored the highest on the nationalist subscale and the lowest on the assimilation and humanist subscales on the items that measured ideology (Sellers et al., 1997), participants in this study whose mean score on race centrality were the highest (*M* centrality ≥ 6), scored the highest on the assimilation subscale. Participant 2 expressed displeasure with her current job in a predominantly White institution in asides during the interview, When explaining her preference for a Black Church, Participant 2 said "Even though, you know, we may branch out and have friends of different races or hang out with people of different cultures but you're still a lot of times more comfortable around your own." Participant 5, who also works in a predominantly White institution said "I enjoy being around Black people. And, really the Black church is the place where I can be around Black people."The researcher would purport that perhaps these two participants identified very strongly with their race while holding beliefs that Black Americans should adopt

dominant behaviors and values because that is what these two participants currently were doing in their jobs. However, occupation satisfaction and race-related occurrences on the job were not investigated overtly in this study.

Other participant mean responses on the ideology subscales were not as distinguishable. Participants 1, 3, and 6's highest subscale mean score was on the humanist subscale. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 8's highest subscale mean score was on the assimilation subscale. Participant 7s highest subscale mean score was a tie between these two scales. Thus, participants in this sample were more likely to believe that Black Americans should adopt behaviors and attitudes of the dominant group (assimilation) or that Black Americans should consider all human beings as being a part of the human race (humanist). In their examination of the MIBI, Cokley and Helm (2001) reported similar factor loadings on both the assimilation and humanist subscale, perhaps explaining this trend in the data.

RQ 7: How Do Racial Identity Attitudes Influence African Americans' God-image?

The domain "African American Image of God" captured participants' perception whether their racial identity attitudes influenced their Image of God. Typically participants expressed that their racial identity attitudes had not influenced their Image of God. However, when the components of one's Image of God were examined (i.e., imagery, cognitions, feelings, characteristics, and beliefs), it would seem that participants' Racial Identity Attitudes *did* influence the belief component of their Image of God. The race centrality scale ranges from 1 to 7, therefore the midpoint on this scale would be a mean score of at least a 3.5. Four participants believed that God identified

with the struggle of Blacks (Participants 5, 6 ,7, and 8). Each of these participants had a mean centrality score that was above average: Participant 5 (*M* centrality = 6.25), Participant 6 (*M* centrality = 5.75), Participant 7 (*M* centrality = 5.13), and Participant 8 (*M* centrality = 4.25). It would appear that racial identity attitudes can influence what one believes about God, thus influencing the Image of God.

Trend in the Data

A trend in both the qualitative interviews and the MIBI emerged: younger participants were more likely than older participants to normatively identify as Black (i.e., have a high mean race centrality) and younger participants were more likely than older participants to think the Black Church was important. Recall Table 6.

Given that older participants had lived through racially charged incidents in American history like civil rights and Jim Crow laws, and given that older participants lived in the rural South, an area of heightened racial tensions (West, 2001), one would think that these participants would identify more as Black American or find the Black Church important. The trend that emerged was that older participants seemed more ready to look past race. For example, Participant 8 said, "Black, being purple, being green, God is good all the time." The question of why race was more salient for younger participants does infer a developmental interpretation of the data. In fact, only Participant 1 and Participant 5 said that the Black Church was important to them and that their Racial Identity Attitudes influenced their choice to attend a Black Church and their Image of God. It should be noted that Participants 1 and 5 were the two youngest participants in this sample.

Table 6 *Overall Trend in Data*

Age	#	Denomination	*M* Centrality	Highest Ideology	*SD* or item variance	BC Important?	RI influence BC	RI influence IOG
52	3	Baptist	2.25	Humanist	1.49	No	No	No
58	8	Baptist	4.25	Assimilation	2.38	No	No	Yes
53	7	Baptist	5.13	Humanist/ Assimilation	2.10	No	No	No
32	4	Methodist	5.38	Assimilation	1.77	Yes	Yes	No
27	1	Baptist	5.44	Humanist	1.45	Yes	Yes	Yes
28	6	Nondenominational with Baptist Roots	5.75	Humanist	1.17	Yes	No	No
28	2	Baptist	6	Assimilation	.54	Yes	Yes	No
26	5	Baptist	6.25	Assimilation	.71	Yes	Yes	Yes

Answered positively that the Black Church was Important to them, that their Racial Identity Attitudes influenced their choice to attend a Black Church and that their Racial Identity Attitudes influenced their Image of God

According to Cross (1971), individuals could reach the internalization stage, or a level or racial development where they hold more integrated opinions about Black Americans and Euro-Americans. Perhaps participants who were older than 50 had reached this stage of their racial development where the fact that they were attending a Black Church was less significant. Of more importance were the spiritual aspects of the church: the singing (Participant 3), the sermon (Participant 7), or the sermon and the praise and worship (Participant 8). Perhaps participants who were younger than 50 had

not reached this stage of development. Given the equanimity of responses to the interview question "what opinions, if any, do you have about what it means to be Black," the researcher wonders if younger participants could be amalgamating the encounter stage (i.e., a person may begin to express pro-Black sentiments) and the Black Involvement substage of the Immersion-Emersion stage. In the immersion-emersion stage of development, a person adopts pro-Black sentiments and might also feel compelled to improve issues within the Black Community. Cross (1971) wrote that the immersion-emersion stage consisted of two substages: anti-White attitudes and Black involvement. It seemed that issues of the Black community were more salient for younger participants. For example, Participant 5 (age 26) explained the most important aspect of her experience as a Black American:

> Being able to use my experiences, the lessons that I've learned and the things that I've accomplished to help and try to assist other Black Americans. So, I guess, making…who I am and who I try to continue to be or who I change—you know you change every day in a sense, but, um, using that as some type of platform to, to try to make a difference in the next generation.

Participant 6 (age 28) expressed the following:

> In what opinions I have about what it means to be Black—I want black people to celebrate themselves… Nothing else around us celebrates [Black Americans]. Not even things that are for us by us celebrate us as anybody could see if they've watched BET lately. Um, you know, so—so much about, so much about Black Americans is the stereotypes and how those stereotypes are perpetrated rather than the reality.

Participant 1 (age 27) revealed, "especially for my generation, a neglect of where we've come from. And things that have been fought for—have taken steps backwards. I think

this generation has taken a few steps backwards at certain times." Participant 4 (age 32) explained:

> The Black church has helped me get to where I'm at and to feel the way I do feel about being Black. And it gives me the opportunity to help others or whatever. So, basically, what I am today, I feel like the influence of the Black church has helped me get here and in doing that, I feel like I should use a little bit of statute that I've got or ability or whatever I can offer back to the Black Church.

Finally, in talking about her preference to attend a Black Church, Participant 2 (age 28) said:

> It just kind of speaks to you as a person or speaks to me as a Black person as opposed to going somewhere else. And I also think it's a level of comfort, you know. We're all comfortable, a lot more comfortable in my opinion around people like ourselves… even if I were to go or to visit a church of a different race, I would want to take somebody Black with me, you know, just so I'm not the only one, you know. So, I think if you go, you know, anywhere you go you kind of like to go where you know you're already gonna be accepted.

Again, it would appear that issues that involved Black Americans and the Black Church were more important to younger participants. Older participants spoke more about individual accomplishments [e.g., Participant 3 (age 52) who said the most important aspect of her experience as a Black American was owning her own business] and the important role of faith (e.g., Participant 7 who said, "I know that He loves us all. He doesn't love the White man any better—even though He sent His son down, He came down as a Caucasian originally. Jews are considered Caucasian. He loves all. He died for me, the oriental guy, He died for us all."). Participant 3 was distinguished in that she did not identify herself as Black, had low opinions of Black Americans, and did not like the Black Church. In fact, Participant 3 preferred the White Church. Counterintuitive to the

sociohistorical assumption of older participants having experienced civil rights and Jim Crow, Cross's model would place Participant 3 in the pre-encounter stage of development. Cross' (1971) model was not used to assess participants in this study, however.

Implications for Counseling

Individual differences that emerged in the data suggested that race alone did not account for participants' racial identity attitudes or for favorable opinions about the Black Church. Likewise, attendance at a Black Church did not account for beliefs and opinions about the church or about God. Hence, it would benefit the field of counseling and counselor educators for clinicians to assess racial identity attitudes and opinions about the Black Church, where applicable. If one were to believe that an individual's Image of God consists of imagery, thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and beliefs, then this study illustrated that African Americans do image a God who is sympathetic and empathic to their historic plight and a God who is actively involved in their lives. This God-image was built upon a foundation that began in the home, was perpetuated in the Black Church, and was solidified by personal experiences. For this reason, God becomes a very important staple in the life of an African American who might identify as religious. Counselors and counselor educators could benefit from incorporating conversations about God in sessions. Based on findings from this research study, God would appear, first and foremost, to be a racial and spiritual ally of such an African American client. In fact, when a counselor conducts an intake session, if a client identified religious, it would be helpful to investigate a little bit about who God is to that client and what God means to the client.

For example, Participant 5 spoke of a God of high expectations who wants her to do his will. In addition, Participant 5 talked about having experiences that were not pleasing in the eyes of God. As an interviewer, the researcher knew her role was to collect the facts. As a counselor, the interviewer's mind was churning to probe into this expectant God that Participant 5, who described her God as omnipresent, carried around with her everywhere. At the end of the interview, Participant 5 expressed that the interview had been "an eye opening experience and, um, the whole God-image thing. Whew. That was difficult. I don't think I've ever thought of God as an image before until today. I don't know—I don't know what I thought of Him as." There was a wealth of intrapersonal and interpersonal information loaded in Participant 5's statements. A culturally competent counselor would be able to unpack some of that language and help Participant 5 learn more about the God that she worships. The goal of the counselor, of course, would be for Participant 5 to learn more about herself.

In addition, participants generally spoke about the importance of their family and their childhood church-going foundation as being influential in their Image of God. Typically discussed was their attachment to their home church. Before an African American client who may identify as religious walks into a counselor's office, he or she might be carrying a bevy of psychodynamic religious and spiritual business. As counselors assess for family of origin information, this researcher posits that it would build rapport and enhance the counseling relationship to assess for information about the participant's home church, their current church, their church memories, and their Image of God. In addition, as a counselor might assess for family dynamics and the role the client plays in the family system, counselors who work with African American clients

who do identify as religious or spiritual may be able to assess for the dynamics of the church and the role the participant might play in this "family."

Suggestions for Future Research

Rather than answering all 21 questions that comprised the qualitative interview, the current investigation produced more questions.

Developmental Model

Based on the trend that emerged in this dataset, it would appear that a developmental assessment would be useful in measuring racial identity, opinions about the Black Church, and Image of God. It would be useful for researchers to pair Cross' (1971) developmental model with a questionnaire about an African American's racial identity and Image of God. In addition, studies that blended Cross' model with the race centrality scale of the MIBI would illustrate both where an African American is developmentally and how much this African American identifies with his or her race. As was the case with Participant 3, given that her mean race centrality score was so low, one can only extrapolate that she is in the pre-encounter stage of racial development. However, based upon her interview, Participant 3 never saw herself as a member of a race. Rather, she viewed herself as an individual. When confronted with a case as such, it would be helpful to use Cross' developmental model and the centrality scale to develop a barometer not just for their attitudes, but how they have made sense of this internalized definition.

In addition, there are developmental models of spirituality that could be used to pair with a qualitative interview on Image of God and racial identity. In this way,

researchers could get a grasp on how someone thinks of God and how they think of themselves.

Identity Model

The eventual agenda for the researcher would involve the creation of an assessment of African American Identity. Such an identity scale would assess for importance of Black Church, the importance of God, the importance of family, the importance of spirituality and religion, the importance of culture (music, arts, etc.), the importance of kinships, the importance of being an African American, and the importance of being an American. Because the psychological significance of racial identity remains unknown (Cokley & Helm, 2001), it would be useful for researchers to adopt an identity model and create an assessment that incorporates the component of race, but also other variables said to influence African Americans. Investigating African American Image of God, then, becomes one step in an attempt to further understand the population. With such an assessment, clinicians would have information as to what aspects about the African American client are most salient and, therefore, could tailor interventions for the client.

Future Image of God Studies

To add to the field of Image of God literature, researchers could use the "imagery, cognitions, feelings, characteristics, and beliefs" domains that were discovered in this investigation and create an assessment for Image of God. Specific to African Americans, researchers could investigate the God-image of more-focused populations with the African American demographic. For example, for participants who have a physical image of God that is a White man, researchers could interview these individuals. In terms of the

variant responses that emerged in this investigation, researchers could interview individuals who held those beliefs and opinions and provide a schematic summary of their opinions and experiences that led to those beliefs and opinions. In addition, researchers could investigate the Image of God and racial identity attitudes of people who lived in Civil Rights era and the Image of God and racial identity attitudes of people who attend multiracial church. Additionally, the current study could be the foundation for another study with more psychodynamically focused questions about growing up that includes questions about home life, parents, home church, the Black church, and rules about God. To enhance the current study researchers add a parental attachment measure along with a measure that assesses self-esteem.

To build upon the suggested research model, it would be useful to delineate the functions or the tasks of the God that a person thinks about or feels. In terms of African Americans, it would be useful to research the functions or tasks of the God that identifies with Black Americans. What is this God like? What does this God do? In addition, based on Participant 8's near-death experience, researchers may wish to expand research on Image of God and near death experiences.

Limitations of the Study

The current study was not without limitations. One limitation in this study was the bias of the interviewer who was also the researcher of this study. The interviewer believes that God exists, but man does shape God in his image. What is meant by this is that man's Image of God is refracted by personal experiences. Hence, depending on personal history, God can become an ally or God can become authoritarian. Somewhere

hidden are the beliefs of the person. Hence, the researcher believes that God is both a spirit and a projection.

Concurrently, the composition of the research team might serve as a limitation. Two members of the research team were African American; these two members also had experiences with a Black Church that might have influenced their decisions despite the bracketing exercise. The research team was composed of three women, two African American and one White American, and the external auditor who was an African American male. The fact that the research team was heavily female and highly educated would be a limitation in this study. Further, one research member was 24 years old, younger than the cutoff age for participants that the researcher established to account for developmental ability to discuss, both abstractly and concretely, the God-Image, Racial Identity, The Black Church, and other personal variables.

A further limitation was the convenience sampling. Because the researcher was also the interviewer and recruiter of participants, 5 of the 8 participants were individuals whom the researcher knew very well or knew about in passing from her undergraduate university experiences. For this reason, all four participants in the study who were in their 20s attended the same large, liberal arts, Southern university. Three of the 8 participants in the study volunteered to be interviewed. For this reason, participant volunteers might have exhibited some social desirability in responses inherent with face-to-face interviews (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005). There may have been volunteers who were similar in their beliefs and opinions based on the sampling technique.

An additional limitation would be the interviewer's questions. For example, with Participant 7, the interviewer asked, "how important is the fact that your church is Black,

how important is that to you. That it's a Black Church?" However, with Participant 6 the interviewer asked, "how important is the Black Church to you?" The original question states, "How important is your Black Church to you?" Responses for both those participants to that question might have been influenced by the wording of that question. Along that vein, the interviewer left "The Black Church" up for participants' interpretation. However, it might have been useful to define the Black Church for participants such that they could address the institution.

Participants 4 and 5 were a married couple who were interviewed in sequence. That is, the interviewer would ask Participant 4 a question and then turned and asked Participant 5 a question. In this setup, Participant 5 was privy to the actual question and had more time to formulate a response. In addition, Participant 4 and 5's responses may have interacted and interfered such that a response that either participant might have shared individually was censored. Participant 3's interview stands out as abnormal based on the curtness of her responses and the length of the interview, in addition to her sentiments. On the day of the interview, Participant 3 disclosed that she had been up since 4 am (the interview was at noon). In addition, Stanley Steamer was cleaning her carpets; there was a great deal of noise and a number of interruptions not present in the other interviews.

Although the goal of the interview was to provide a breadth of information about variables said to influence Image of God and Racial Identity Attitudes, it might have been more beneficial to have asked more focused questions rather than transitioning from topic to topic.

All interviews took place in North Carolina, which is in the Southern part of the United States. The regional flavors of these interviews must be mentioned. In addition, although Hill et al. (1997) suggested that CQR addresses representativeness of the findings in the sample that might be generalizable to similar samples, the nature of qualitative research is such that results typically are not generalizable to a broad population. For this reason, the researcher acknowledges these findings may be limited just to this study and not be generalizable to all African Americans in North Carolina who attend a rural Black Church.

Conclusion

The findings in this study highlight the need for continued research of variables specific to African American experiences, like the Black Church, Racial Identity, and Image of God. In addition, the findings suggest that assessing these variables in a clinical setting can build rapport and provide therapeutic insight into the African American client's opinions about race and Image of God, where Image of God is comprised of the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, characteristics, and visual imagery that is learned in the home, through personal experiences, and at the Black Church

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APPENDIX A: PILOT STUDY INFORMED CONSENT

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM

Project Title: "Tell Me What Your God Look Like": A Pilot Study of African Americans and the God Image

Project Director: Dr. L. DiAnne Borders

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project. The purpose of this research project is to determine the Image of God and Racial Identity of an African American attendee of a Black Church. More specifically, this study seeks to investigate your personal experiences with and perceptions of your race, perceptions of your parents, perceptions of yourself, and perceptions of your Church, and how these things may relate to the ways in which you imagine God.

Why are you asking me?

You have been chosen to be a participant in this research study because you are at least 25 years old and you attend a Black Church at least once a month. Either you volunteered to be a part of this research investigation or you were recommended to the student investigator as a potential participant.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

As a participant in this investigation, you will be asked to complete a measure that assesses your Racial Identity attitudes and ideological beliefs. In addition, the student investigator will ask questions about your church, your Image of God, and your views on being an African American, along with any items that may influence your perception of your church, Image of God, and your views on being an African American. The total estimated time of the entire investigation is one hour and thirty minutes (1.5 hours), with up to 10 minutes allotted for you to complete the measure that assesses your Racial Identity attitudes and ideological beliefs, and up to one hour and twenty minutes to complete the interview with the student investigator. The investigation will begin after you sign this consent form.

After the interview is completed and within one to two weeks, the student investigator will contact you and provide you with a written transcript of your responses for your perusal and approval. In addition, you will receive information about your score on the Racial Identity assessment. Should you have any questions after the interview, the student investigator can be reached at mlwelch@uncg.edu or (919) 605-6010.

Are there any audio/video recording?

Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed, although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below.

What are the dangers to me?

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. All interview questions are open-ended; none of the questions is forced-response. Although participants will be expected to talk about religion, personal experiences, and perceptions of their race, parents, and selves, given the voluntary nature of the project, there should be no risks to participants such that the participant's reputation or employability will be compromised in the unlikely event that the participant is identifiable.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482 Questions, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Dr. L. DiAnne Borders who may be contacted at (336) 334-3425 . In addition, the student investigator, Metoka L. Welch, can be reached at mlwelch@uncg.edu and by phone at (919) 605-6010.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

The benefits to you for participating in this study may include insights gained by you reflecting upon personal experiences unique to you that may have shaped your Image of God and Racial Identity, including the ways in which your church, your parents, or your own self-perceptions may have influenced both your Image of God and Racial Identity. It is important to the field of counselor education and supervision to broaden our understanding of the God that African Americans worship and if this is a function of Racial Identity and/or the church that an African American attends.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

Because the existing literature has relied on quantitative studies with majority Caucasian and Catholic participants, the student investigator hopes to provide an in-depth analysis related to your God-image. Society may benefit from changes in counselor education literature and multicultural counseling curricula that address the potentially unique relationship to God of African American church attendees and the ways in which counselors and counselor educators may better target and understand this population and their religious and help-seeking behaviors.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

A $15 gift card will be provided to those who choose to participate in the research study. Participating in this research study is of no monetary cost to you.

How will you keep my information confidential?

The student investigator will audiotape the interview on a digital recorder that will be stored in a lock box that will be kept in the student investigator's home office. Only the student investigator will have access to the key. The interview will be transcribed by the student investigator in her home office, at which point, the student investigator will destroy the digital audio file of the interview. Informed consent documentation will be kept in a notebook and stored in a separate lock box that will remain in the student investigator's file cabinet at the University. Only the student investigator will have the key to this lock box. The student investigator will ask you demographic questions like your age, relationship status, and education level for data analysis purposes, but will not refer to you by your name on the tape or in the transcription. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the student investigator must add a description of any legal duty to report abuse that might supersede these confidentiality promises.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you have read it, or that it has been read to you and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing to consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Metoka L. Welch.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B: MIBI

CENTRALITY ITEMS (8): 1(R), 6, 9, 13 (R), 19, 33, 48, 51 (R)

PRIVATE REGARD ITEMS (6): 4, 7, 8, 24 (R), 54, 55

PUBLIC REGARD ITEMS (6): 5, 15, 17 (R), 52 (R), 53, 56

ASSIMILATION ITEMS (9): 10, 18, 37, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 46

HUMANIST ITEMS (9): 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31,32, 35

MINORITY ITEMS (9): 20, 34, 36, 38, 42, 45, 47, 49, 50

NATIONALIST ITEMS (9): 2, 3, 11, 12, 14, 16, 21, 22, 25

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI)

	Strongly Disagree			**Neutral**			**Strongly Agree**
1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music and literature.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Black people should not marry interracially.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I feel good about Black people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Overall, Blacks are considered good by others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I am happy that I am Black.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
8. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Blacks who espouse separatism are as racist as White people who also espouse separatism.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Blacks would be better off if they adopted Afrocentric values.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Black students are better off going to schools that are controlled and organized by Blacks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Black people must organize themselves into a separate Black political force.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. In general, others respect Black people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from other Black businesses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Most people consider Blacks, on the average, to be more ineffective than other racial groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. A sign of progress is that Blacks are in the mainstream of America more than ever before.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. A thorough knowledge of Black history is very important for Blacks today.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Blacks and Whites can never live in true harmony because of racial differences.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
23. Black values should not be inconsistent with human values.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I often regret that I am Black.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. White people can never be trusted where Blacks are concerned.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Blacks should have the choice to marry interracially.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Blacks and Whites have more commonalties than differences.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Black people should not consider race when buying art or selecting a book to read.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Blacks would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on Black issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as Black.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. We are all children of a higher being, therefore, we should love people of all races.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Blacks should judge Whites as individuals and not as members of the White race.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. The struggle for Black liberation in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. People regardless of their race have strengths and limitations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Blacks should learn about the oppression of other groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
37. Because America is predominantly white, it is important that Blacks go to White schools so that they can gain experience interacting with Whites.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. Black people should treat other oppressed people as allies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. Blacks should strive to be full members of the American political system.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. Blacks should try to work within the system to achieve their political and economic goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. Blacks should strive to integrate all institutions which are segregated.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. The racism Blacks have experienced is similar to that of other minority groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. Blacks should feel free to interact socially with White people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. Blacks should view themselves as being Americans first and foremost.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. There are other people who experience racial injustice and indignities similar to Black Americans.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. The plight of Blacks in America will improve only when Blacks are in important positions within the system.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. Blacks will be more successful in achieving their goals if they form coalitions with other oppressed groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. Blacks should try to become friends with people from other oppressed groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
50. The dominant society devalues anything not White male oriented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. Blacks are not respected by the broader society.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. I am proud to be Black.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55. I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56. Society views Black people as an asset.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX C: FULL STUDY INFORMED CONSENT

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM

Project Title: "Tell Me What Your God Look Like": A Study of African Americans and the God Image

Project Director: Dr. L. DiAnne Borders

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project. The purpose of this research project is to determine the Image of God and Racial Identity of African American attendees of Black Churches. More specifically, this study seeks to investigate your personal experiences with and perceptions of your race, perceptions of your parents, perceptions of yourself, and perceptions of your Church, and how these things may relate to the ways in which you imagine God.

Why are you asking me?

You have been chosen to be a participant in this research study because you are at least 25 years old and you attend a Black Church at least once a month. Either you volunteered to be a part of this research investigation or you were recommended to the student investigator as a potential participant.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

As a participant in this investigation, you will be asked to complete a measure that assesses your Racial Identity attitudes and ideological beliefs. In addition, the student investigator will ask questions about your church, your Image of God, and your views on being an African American, along with any items that may influence your perception of your church, Image of God, and your views on being an African American. The total estimated time of the entire investigation is one hour and thirty minutes (1.5 hours), with up to 15 minutes allotted for you to complete the measure that assesses your Racial Identity attitudes and ideological beliefs, and up to one hour and fifteen minutes to complete the interview with the student investigator. The investigation will begin after you sign this consent form.

After the interview is completed and within one to two weeks, the student investigator will contact you and provide you with a written transcript of your responses for your perusal and approval. In addition, you will receive information about your score on the Racial Identity assessment. Should you have any questions after the interview, the student investigator can be reached at mlwelch@uncg.edu or (919) 605-6010.

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Are there any audio/video recording?

Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed, although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below.

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Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

The benefits to you for participating in this study may include insights gained by you reflecting upon personal experiences unique to you that may have shaped your Image of God and Racial Identity, including the ways in which your church, your parents, or your own self-perceptions may have influenced both your Image of God and Racial Identity. It is important to the field of counselor education and supervision to broaden our understanding of the God that African Americans worship and if this is a function of Racial Identity and/or the church that an African American attends.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

Because the existing literature has relied on quantitative studies with majority Caucasian and Catholic participants, the student investigator hopes to provide an in-depth analysis related to your God-image. Society may benefit from changes in counselor education literature and multicultural counseling curricula that address the potentially unique relationship to God of African American church attendees and the ways in which counselors and counselor educators may better target and understand this population and their religious and help-seeking behaviors.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

A $15 gift card will be provided to those who choose to participate in the research study.

Participating in this research study is of no monetary cost to you.

How will you keep my information confidential?

The student investigator will audiotape the interview on a digital recorder that will be stored in a lock box that will be kept in the student investigator's home office. Only the student investigator will have access to the key. The interview will be transcribed by the student investigator in her home office, at which point, the student investigator will destroy the digital audio file of the interview. Informed consent documentation will be kept in a notebook and stored in a separate lock box that will remain in the student investigator's file cabinet at the University. Only the student investigator will have the key to this lock box. The student investigator will ask you demographic questions like your age, relationship status, and education level for data analysis purposes, but will not refer to you by your name on the tape or in the transcription. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the student investigator must add a description of any legal duty to report abuse that might supersede these confidentiality promises.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you have read it, or that it has been read to you and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing to consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Metoka L. Welch.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Hello,

My name is Metoka Welch and I am a doctoral student at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am writing to request your participation in my dissertation research project. The purpose of this research project is to determine the Image of God and Racial Identity of African American attendees of Black Churches. More specifically, this study seeks to investigate your personal experiences with and perceptions of your race, perceptions of your parents, perceptions of yourself, and perceptions of your Church, and how these things may relate to the ways in which you imagine God. To be a participant in this research study, you must be least 25 years old and attend a Black Church at least once a month.

As a participant in this investigation, you will receive a $15 gift card to compensate for your valuable time. In this study, you will be asked to complete a measure that assesses your Racial Identity attitudes and ideological beliefs. In addition, I will ask questions about your church, your Image of God, and your views on being an African American, along with any items that may influence your perception of your church, Image of God, and your views on being an African American. The total estimated time of the entire investigation is one hour and thirty minutes (1.5 hours), with up to 15 minutes allotted for you to complete the measure that assesses your Racial Identity attitudes and ideological beliefs, and up to one hour and fifteen minutes to complete the interview with me. After the interview is completed and within two weeks, I will contact you and provide you with a written transcript of your responses for your perusal and approval.

The location of the interview will be a place of your choosing. Because your voice potentially will be identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed. I will limit access to the tape by keeping it stored in a lock box to which only I will have the key. In addition, I will destroy the digital audio file of the interview. Informed consent documentation will be kept in a notebook and stored in a separate lock box that will remain in my file cabinet at the University.

Please note that your participation in this research project is voluntary. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Institutional Review Board makes sure that studies with people follow federal rules; they have approved this study. Should you have any concerns about your rights and how you are being treated, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482. Questions, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Dr. L. DiAnne Borders who may be contacted at (336) 334-3425. **If you have questions, want more information, or would like to be a part of this investigation, please contact me, Metoka L. Welch, at mlwelch@uncg.edu and/or by phone at (919) 605-6010.**

I thank you for your time and hope to have your every consideration.

Sincerely,

Metoka L. Welch, MA, NCC

APPENDIX E: INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Demographics:
    a. Age
    b. Gender
    c. Income Estimate
    d. Relationship Status
    e. Education Level
    f. Frequency of Church Attendance
    g. Number of Years in the South (cumulative)
    h. Religious Salience – on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being "completely" and 1 being "not at all" how salient/important is religion to you?
2. If I asked you to describe your God or Higher Power in one word or phrase, what would that be? Please explain.
3. Let me elaborate. If you were to picture God or Higher Power or put descriptive words on your God or Higher Power, what words would you use? In other words, what is your image of God?
    a. Does your God have physical features? If so, what does your God look like?
    b. What are characteristics of your God? In other words, what distinguishes your God or Higher Power from other important relationships in your life?
4. Is there or has there been anyone in your life who you would apply the same language to, from childhood to the present?

a. Some people believe that our image of God is related to the image we have of our parents. What do you think about that? Please elaborate.

b. Some people also believe that our image of God is related to the confidence and satisfaction we have in ourselves, or our self-esteem. Do you agree/disagree? Please elaborate.

5. Do you think any of the variables mentioned in the first question (a-g) influence or have influenced your image of God?
6. What do you think has influenced your Image of God the most?
7. Do you think this image has changed over time?
    a. If so, when and why?
8. Why do you go to the church that you attend?
9. What would you say is the mission (if any) of your church?
10. Reflecting on the sermons that you have heard, would you say that there is a unifying theme in your pastor's messages? If so, what would you say that theme is?
11. Is the fact that you attend a majority Black congregation church and that your preacher is Black important to you? Why/why not?
    a. Could you imagine yourself at a majority White church with a White preacher? Why or why not?
    b. Do you think your image of God would be the same for a White person who attends a majority White congregation with a White preacher? Why or why not?

12. Do you think that your image of God is different from the image that other Black people may have? Please elaborate.
13. Do you think your Image of God is different from the image that other people of your gender may have? Please elaborate.
14. What opinions, if any, do you have about what it means to be Black?
15. If you woke up tomorrow and were no longer Black, do you think your image of God would be the same?
16. What opinions, if any, do you have about what it means to attend a Black church?
17. What is the most important aspect of your experience at Church?
18. What is the most important aspect of your experience as a Black American?

APPENDIX F: FULL STUDY DEMOGRAPHIC FORM AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic Sheet:

Age_____

Gender_____

Income Estimate_____

Relationship Status_____

Education Level_____

Frequency of Church Attendance_____

Denomination_____

Did you grow up in the South? If so, what state and for how long

_____

How may I contact you to provide you with a copy of the interview after it has been transcribed? Check all that apply

☐ In person. If so, please provide your telephone # _____

☐ Through the mail. If so, please provide your Address

_____

_____Throug

☐ h email_____

1. When you hear the word God, what do you think?
2. When you hear the word God, what do you feel?

   ***Now, take a moment to go inside.**

3. What does God look like? For example, if I asked you to draw what you see, what would you draw?
    a. If I asked you to describe the God or Higher Power that you see in one word or phrase, what would that be? Please explain.
    b. What are the characteristics of this God?
4. Would you say that either or both of your parents have some of the same physical features and/or personal characteristics of this God-image? Explain? Which parent(s)?
5. Do you think that you have some of those physical features or characteristics? Why/why not?
6. Would you say that your Image of God is related to how you see yourself or your opinion of yourself?
7. Do you think any of the variables mentioned in the first question (a-h) influence or have influenced your image of God?
8. What do you think has influenced your Image of God the most?
9. Do you think this image has changed over time?
    a. If so, when and why?
10. How important is religion for you? Tell me more about that.
11. Why do you go to the church that you attend?
12. How important is your Black Church to you? Tell me more about that.
13. What is the most important aspect of your experience at the Black Church that you attend?

14. Would you say that your church mainly focuses on addressing social and political issues in the surrounding community and/or larger society (this-worldly) or would you say your church mainly focuses on survival and receiving compensation that would make it all worth it once you are in heaven and rejoined with God? (other-wordly). Scholars call this your church's orientation.
15. Do you think your church's orientation influences or has influenced your Image of God? Tell me more about that.
16. Do you think a person of another race who does not attend a Black Church would have the same Image of God that you have? Explain.
17. Does your pastor incorporate racial empowerment or pride with being Black into sermons? How?
18. What opinions, if any, do you have about what it means to be Black?
19. Do you think these opinions influence or have influenced your choice to attend a Black Church?
20. Do you think these opinions influence or have influenced your Image of God?
21. What is the most important aspect of your experience as a Black American?
22. Is there anything else that you would like to share/think is important or relevant to my
    study?
23. Is there anything you would like to add about your experience during this interview?

APPENDIX G: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Research Question	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondents	Label
How do African Americans who attend a Black Church describe their Image of God	Imagery	"not an actual image" (2)	Light	(1)(2)(4)(6)	Typical
		"we are made in His image" (7)	Male/ father-figure	(1)(2)(3)(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	General
			Has a human form	(2)(4)(5)(7)(8)	Typical
			Projected Image	(3)(5)(8)	Variant
			White when younger	(1)(2)(5)	Variant
	Cognitions	"a greater more powerful being" (6)	Higher power/being	(2)(4)(6)(7)	Typical
			Spirit	(5)(6)(8)	Variant
			Creator	(1)(6)(7)	Variant
	Feelings	"Kind of fearful" (3)	Want to please Him	(3)(4)(5)	Variant
		"A calming presence to me" (6)	Peaceful	(2)(4)(6)	Variant
			Content	(2)(7)	Variant
			Secure	(6)(7)(8)	Variant
		"honored to be in His presence" (5)	Humble	(4)(5)	Variant
	Characteristics of God	"able to do things normal mortals can't do" (2)	Omnipotent	(1)(2)(3)(5)(6)(7)	General
			Consuming/all-encompassing	(1)(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	General

		"Someone that can just see you through" (3)	Dependable	(2)(3)(4)(6)	Typical
			Knowledgeable	(2)(3)(6)	Variant
		"I think of him as being caring" (5)	Compassionate	(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			Loving	(5)(6)(7)	Variant
			Soothing	(1)(4)(6)	Variant
	Beliefs about God	"Am I doing everything I can to please Him?" (3)	Have to live right	(1)(3)(4)(5)	Typical
			Heaven litmus test (will I go to heaven?)	(2)(3)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
			Put others first	(3)(8)	Variant
		"He has good things out for me" (6)	Providence	(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
		"God had a special place for Black people" (8)	Identifies with Struggle of Blacks	(5)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
		"[Dependent on] the context where God is presented" (1)	Distant God	(1)(6)	Variant
		"It's got to be in you" (8)	Internal	(1)(5)(8)	Variant
To what extent do they use	Descriptions of Parents	"I can see them showing those characteristics in different ways" (1)	Mom positive energy	(1)(2)(6)(8)	Typical
			Mom nurturing	(1)(6)	Variant

similar language to describe their parents?			Dad more distant	(1)(8)	Variant
			Dad positive characteristics very influential	(5)(6)	Variant
		"Both of them" (4)	Loving	(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			A Good resource	(3)(4)(5)(6)(8)	Typical
			Invested in development	(3)(5)(6)(8)	Typical
			Forgiving	(4)(5)(7)	Variant
To what extent do they use similar language to describe themselves	Description of Self	"I try to model myself to an extent as much as I can" (4)	Dependable	(2)(3)(8)	Variant
			Caring for Others	(3)(4)(7)	Variant
			Peaceful	(4)(6)	Variant
What other variables influence their God-image?	Influences on Image of God	"I grew up in a very religious family" (2)	Family	(1)(2)(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	General
			Childhood churchgoing foundation	(1)(2)(4)(5)(6)(7)	General
		"I'm going to go to church at least 3 times a month, if not 4"(4)	Bible	(2)(5)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
			Regular Church Attendance	(2)(4)(6)(8)	Typical
			Pastor/word	(2)(7)(8)	Variant
		"My own personal experience has given rise to my present day God" (1)	College Experiences	(1)(2)(5)(6)	Typical
			Prodigal experiences (leaving	(1)(2)(4)(5)	Typical

			church, but returning)		
			Being Married	(3)(4)(5)(6)	Typical
			Being Black	(1)(5)(6)	Variant
			Age	(1)(2)(3)	Variant
			Job	(6)(8)	Variant
How does the type of Black church (other-worldly vs. this-worldly) influence their God-image?	Church orientation	"Kind of hard to say either/or" (1)	Both – Focus on service and afterlife	(1)(2)(8)	Variant
		"We definitely focus on outreach and helping out in the community" (3)	This-worldly	(3)(4)	Variant
		"This life is temporary and life in heaven will be eternal" (7)	Other-worldly	(5)(6)(7)	Variant
		"Has your church's orientation influenced your image of God?" (question)	Yes – being with God is focus	(2)(6)(7)	Variant
			No	(1)(3)(4)(5)(8)	Typical

How do Racial Identity Attitudes Influence attendance at/choice of a Black Church	Attitudes about what it means to be Black	"Black is Beautiful" (4)	Proud to be Black	(1)(2)(4)(5)(6)(7)(8)	General
			Unique Experience	(1)(2)(4)(6)(8)	Typical
		"Have that thing in common" (2)	Rich heritage	(1)(2)(5)(8)	Typical
			Kinship	(1)(2)(5)	Variant
		"Seeing the strengths and weaknesses of our race" (1)	Embodying Stereotypes	(1)(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			Passive	(1)(2)(3)(4)	Typical
			Intolerant	(1)(3)(5)	Variant
			Self-loathing	(3)(6)(7)	Variant
		"Under barbaric conditions, YET and STILL Black people are here" (6)	Survivors	(1)(5)(6)(8)	Typical
			Have made contributions to America	(1)(6)(7)(8)	Typical
		"Your accomplishments are marginalized" (6)	Have to prove yourself	(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			Thought of negatively by others	(1)(6)(7)	Variant
	Opinions about the Black Church	"So much about me and I learned about myself culturally comes from the Black Church" (6)	Importance of home church	(2)(4)(5)(6)(7)	Typical
			Culture	(1)(2)(5)(6)	Typical
			It is an identity	(1)(2)(6)	Variant
			Empowerment	(2)(6)(7)	Variant
			Training for Life	(2)(5)(6)	Variant

		"Nowhere else is it ok to express yourself so wildly and freely" (1)	Singing	(1)(2)(3)(5)(7)	Typical
			Expressiveness	(1)(2)(5)(7)	Typical
			Call and response	(1)(2)(5)(6)	Typical
			Preaching	(1)(5)(7)	Variant
			Worship	(5)(8)	Variant
		"sense of togetherness. It's a unit" (1)	Helping others	(4)(5)(6)(8)	Typical
			Defines Family	(4)(6)	Variant
			Being around Black people	(1)(2)(5)	Variant
		"The Black Church is not genuine" (3)	People in church can be challenging	(3)(5)	Variant
			Used as a crutch	(3)(4)	Variant
How do Racial Identity Attitudes influence African Americans' God-image?	African American Image of God	"I can't say that [Racial Identity attitudes] has" (2)	Has not influenced	(2)(3)(4)(6)(7)	Typical
		"How I think of Black People, I just automatically think of God being there for Black people" (5)	God has been cornerstone	(1)(5)(8)	Variant